

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37

**Intro:** The parable of the Good Samaritan was given by our Lord in response to a question which “a certain lawyer” asked Him, and Luke tells us that the lawyer was *tempting* Him. This immediately suggests to us that the lawyer was trying to trap the Lord into say something which would lead to His arrest, and, hopefully, to His death. And we think this because that was often the attitude that people had, especially the religious leaders of the Jews, when they came to the Lord with a question.

But that is not always the meaning of the word, “tempted.” In Genesis 22:1 we read “that God did tempt Abraham.” This means that He was testing Abraham, not to get him to do the wrong thing, but *to prove* him, and to show the depth and reality of Abraham’s faith. He was *trying* Abraham, as Heb. 11:17 indicates.

So it would seem that this was the purpose that this Jewish “lawyer.” had in mind. As a lawyer, he would have been well-acquainted with the Mosaic law because it was his job to instruct others in the law. But somehow this man was not satisfied. And so his question was, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The key to understanding this question is the word “inherit.”

We all know that an inheritance is something that has been assigned to us in someone’s will. It is stated in a will that when a parent, some other family member, or possibly even just a friend who is not related to us, wants to leave a part or all of his possessions to us when he or she dies. The inheritance is not ours in actuality until the person dies. Sometimes a person will include someone else in his will because of some kindness done to him, as, for example, the man who was injured in this parable may have wanted to show his gratitude to the Samaritan by remembering him in his will. But usually an inheritance is given gratuitously, that is, in grace.

Thayer, in his Greek Lexicon, traced the development of this word *inherit* as it was used by the Jews. The land of Canaan was their inheritance according to the promise of God. We all know this from Scripture--not their only inheritance, but an important part of it. But then Thayer said this:

But as the Israelites after taking possession of the land were harassed almost perpetually by their hostile neigh-

bors, and even driven out of the country for a considerable period, it came to pass that the phrase [to inherit] was transferred to denote the tranquil and stable *possession* [italics mine] of the holy land crowned with all divine blessings, an experience which pious Israelites were to expect under the Messiah: ...hence it became a formula denoting *to partake of eternal salvation in the Messiah's kingdom* (p. 349).

Therefore, we must understand that this lawyer was asking what he needed to do in order to be assured that eventually he would enter into the blessings of salvation. We could paraphrase his question as meaning, "How can I know that when I die I will go to heaven?" With all of the knowledge that he had of the OT, he still had no assurance that he was really saved. And it was assurance that he wanted. He had been raised to believe that salvation was the result of works, but obviously he had no confidence in his heart that salvation was earned by works.

So the Lord asked him what his understanding of the law's message of salvation was. The answer that he gave showed that the Holy Spirit had been working in his heart and teaching him things which most of his fellow lawyers were completely ignorant of. Perhaps this lawyer was a first century Martin Luther.

What was his answer? Read it in verse 27.

How he came to understand this, we do not know. Perhaps he had heard the Lord give this answer, or it could have been that the Spirit of God had taught him, as like Luther, he had pored over the Scriptures.

The Lord commended him for his answer. Read verse 28.

Now we know that the Lord was not saying that we get to heaven by loving the Lord and by loving our neighbor, *but what He was saying was that these were the evidences of salvation, and that if this kind of love were in his heart, he could be assured that he would ultimately inherit eternal life.*

I also have to be careful to point out that the Lord was not saying that we have to wait until the Lord comes or until we get to heaven before we can have eternal life. He was saying that we will come into the fulness of our inheritance when we are with the Lord. You will remember that the Apostle Peter spoke this way about our inheritance. Let me read his

words to you which are found in 1 Peter 1:3-9:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

This is why the Lord said that if this lawyer really loved the Lord with all of his heart, soul, strength, and mind, and his neighbor as himself, he could be assured of his salvation. A non-Christian does not love the Lord this way, nor does he love other people this way.

But then the lawyer opened the door to the Lord (whether he knew it or not) when he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" Luke said that he did this "willing," or desiring, "to justify himself." I suggest that this means that he was anxious to be clear in his own mind that he really would inherit eternal life.

Without any further delay, the Lord told him a story which has been known to all of us as The Parable of the Good Samaritan. There have been different attempts to allegorize this story, but it serves its purpose if we take as it is.

The first thing that we are told is about:

#### **I. "A CERTAIN MAN" (Luke 10:30).**

I believe we are justified in saying that this was a *Jewish man*. He was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, a road which historians tell us was

notorious because of the way thieves would attack, rob, and sometimes kill those who were traveling on the road. They stripped him of all that he had, wounded him (because he may have resisted them), and they almost killed him. He probably was unconscious when the thieves left. His body was left on the road.

The first one to come by was:

## **II. "A CERTAIN PRIEST" (Luke 10:31).**

Notice the words, "by chance." It is like we might say, "I just came along, and saw this man lying in the road." We think of an event like this as a coincidence. But the Lord must have meant that this was providential. It was a test for the priest. Now the priest's job was that of ministering in the temple, and assisting in the offering of sacrifices to God. But he had not yet learned that the Lord desires mercy, not sacrifice. Cf. Hosea 6:6 and Matt. 9:13. And so he passed by on the other side of the road.

Then came:

## **III. "A LEVITE" (Luke 10:32).**

The Levites assisted the priests. This man went over to look at the injured traveler, and then he went by on the other side.

The priest and the Levite were two men whom you would have thought would have wanted to help the man out of his difficulty. But their religious position and knowledge (however much that may have been) did not hinder them from going on, not knowing if the man would get the help that he needed before he died.

The third man to come along was:

## **IV. "A CERTAIN SAMARITAN" (Luke 10:33-35).**

He saw the injured man, went over to him, realized what had happened, and "had compassion on him." He bound his wounds (probably by tearing part of his own garment), poured oil and wine on his wounds--wine to cleanse them, and oil to soothe them and to start the healing process (according to Trench, p. 320), put the man on his own beast, took him to an inn where he personally cared for him. He stayed all night with him, and then when leaving the next day gave the inn keeper two pence take

care of him (the equivalent of two days' pay), and told him that he would be coming back that way as he returned home and that he would take care of any additional expense that the inn keeper might have had.

- Now remember the man who was robbed and injured was a Jew. The priest was a Jew. The Levite was a Jew. But the man who provided the injured man with help was *a Samaritan*.

Do you remember you when the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, as we learn from John 4, and she was surprised that He would even talk to her because, as she said, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9).

Let me read to you how Archbishop Trench described the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in our Lord's day. Speaking of the Samaritan, he said,

- This man was exposed to exactly the same dangers as those who went before him; moreover it was no fellow-countryman who demanded his help; one rather of an alien and hostile race; but he neither took counsel of selfish fears, nor steeled his heart against all pity with the thought that the wounded and bleeding man was a Jew, whom he as a Samaritan was bound to detest; but when he saw him, '*he had compassion on him.*' This, as the best thing which he gave or had to give, is mentioned first; the rest will follow. While the priest and Levite, boasting themselves the ministers of God of all pity and compassion, forgot the commonest duties of humanity, it was left to the excommunicated Samaritan, whose very name was a bye-word of contempt among the Jews, synonymous (John viii. 48), to show what love was; and this toward one of an alien stock, one of a people who would have no dealings with his people, who anathematized them; even as no doubt, all the influences which had surrounded him from his youth would have led him, as far as he yielded to them, to repay insult with insult, and hate with hate. For if the Jew called the Samaritan a Cuthite,--a proselyte of the lions (2 Kings xvii. 25)--an idolater worshipping the image of a dove,--if he cursed him publicly in his synagogue,--prayed that he might have no portion in the resurrection of life, and by refusing under any conditions to admit him as a proselyte, did his best to secure the fulfilment of this prayer,--proclaimed that his testimony was naught and might not be received,--that he who entertained a Samaritan in his house was laying up judgments for his children,--that to eat a morsel of his food was as the eating of swine's flesh,--and would rather

suffer any need than be beholden to him for the smallest office of charity,--if he set it as an object of desire that he might never so much as *see* a Cuthite; the Samaritan was not behindhand in cursing, and as little in active demonstrations of enmity and ill-will...

But the heart of this Samaritan was not hardened; though so many influences must have been at work to steel it against the distresses of a Jew... All the details of his tender care toward the poor stranger, of whom he knew nothing, save that he belonged to a nation the most bitterly hostile to his own, are given [by our Lord] with tender minuteness (*Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, pp. 317-320).

So you can see that this was no ordinary story that the Lord was telling. It would not be surprising to learn that such kindness had never taken place before.

Then came:

#### **V. THE LORD'S QUESTION, THE LAWYER'S ANSWER, AND THE LORD'S COMMAND (Luke 10:36, 37).**

The question is in verse 36. The lawyer's answer, in the first part of verse 37. The Lord's command in the latter part of verse 37.

**Concl:** What did all of this mean? The Lord was not saying that we earn our way to heaven by the good things that we do. If that had been possible, He would never have come. No, the point of the parable is that we can be assured of our inheritance, that we are on the way to heaven, when we see changes in our lives in our relationship to God and in our relationship to people which could only be there as a result of the work of God's grace upon our heart.

Let me point out in closing that many have seen in this parable that the Good Samaritan is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we are pictured by the wounded, helpless, and dying Jew.

## THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT -- A LESSON IN PRAYER

Luke 11:1-13

**Intro:** This passage falls into three easily identifiable parts. *The first* gives us the pattern of prayer when the Lord responded to His disciples that they wanted to be taught how to pray. This is in Luke 11:1-4. *The second* is the parable of prayer in verses 5-8. *And in the third* we have the promises of prayer in verses 9-13.

### I. THE PATTERN OF PRAYER (Luke 11:1-4).

In Matthew's account (6:9-13) we have the fuller account of this prayer, the one which most of us are probably familiar. It ends with, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." But it is also important to notice that the Lord introduced this prayer with the words, "After this manner therefore pray ye." I agree with those who think that the Lord never intended this prayer to be prayed as it is used in many churches today--a prayer repeated by rote as a part of a service in which people repeat it without paying much, if any attention at all, to the words. And I believe further that the parable as well as the promises which follow show that prayer was always meant to be that which was a time when the people of God could pour out their hearts to the Lord, either in worship, or in petition, or both. The reference to "importunity" in the parable, and the commands with their promises in verses like Luke 11:9, 10 picture anything but a congregation of people repeating words which they can forget as soon as they had said them. I don't want to be unkind, but it seems that many people who grow up in churches never get beyond the repetition of what they call *the Lord's Prayer*. Their hearts are never moved by what they say. They know little or nothing about praying with importunity. And it is not right to call it *the Lord's prayer* because it contains words which our Lord, because He is the Lord, would never need to pray.

Now, having said all of this, I do believe very strongly that the Lord gave here a pattern of prayer--and yet not a pattern of all kinds of prayer. We certainly have worship at the beginning of the prayer, and again at the end of the prayer (if we take Matthew's account of the prayer). If there is intercession, it is only vaguely expressed in the words, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." But there is nothing of the kind of intercession we find, for example, in the prayers of the Apostle Paul. The petitions that are expressed are of a personal nature, speaking of the need for daily food, the forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from temptation and the Evil One. But it certainly would be very

helpful for all of us, from time to time, to place our prayers along side of this prayer to make sure that we are not overlooking anything in our own personal relationship with the Lord. Our prayers often fall into a certain routine, and so we need something to awaken us to other matters about which we should be praying. And what I am saying about this Model Prayer, I would say also about all of the other prayers that are recorded for us in Scripture. If we turn our Bible reading into prayer each day, our prayers will be different in some respects every day. So this prayer is very important for us to know, and one which we should use as a guide in our praying.

Now let us think about:

## II. THE PARABLE OF PRAYER (Luke 11:5-8).

Many expositors in the past, and probably in the present, have gone to ridiculous lengths in spiritualizing the details of this parable. Let me read to you the interpretation which Martin Luther put on this parable which is described by Archbishop Trench in his book, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, pp. 331, 332). This is what Luther said the Lord was teaching:

He is urging on his hearers the duty of being able to give a reason for their faith, and one not merely defensive, but such as shall win and persuade others; and this, since it may well happen that one from the heathen world, or a heretic, or even a nominal Catholic, weary of his wanderings in error, and longing to know something of the Christian faith, though lacking confidence or opportunity to go to the bishop, or catechists, may come to them, claiming instruction in righteousness at their lips. How greatly it behoved in such a case to have what is set before him; or having nothing, they are then taught in this parable whom they should seek to for the supply of their own needs and the needs of their friend,--that they go to God, beseeching Him to teach them, that so they may be competent to teach others.

Luther taught many wonderful truths, but we could only describe this explanation as utterly ridiculous. But many of the reformers and some of their modern day successor, such as some books by Arthur Pink, fall into the same category. There is absolutely no reason why we can't take this as an event in everyday life which illustrated what the Lord was seeking to teach His disciples about prayer. People who are always looking for some hidden meaning behind the obvious meaning of Scripture can lead us far astray. I like what Dr. Sutcliffe used to say, "When common sense



makes good sense, seek no other sense.” As I pointed out in another way this morning, the Holy Spirit in giving us the Word was not seeking to make Scripture as difficult to understand as He could. We need the teaching of the Spirit, but He does not violate what is normally reasonable and understandable.

The Lord brought this down to the people to whom He was speaking when He said, “Which of you shall have a friend...” So he was taking an illustration out of their lives. The man in the parable had been surprised by a visit from a friend. He obviously did not know that his friend was coming. His friend arrived late, and he had no food to give to him. So even though it was midnight, he went to another friend that he had and asked if he could borrow three loaves of bread. This latter friend was in bed. His children and his servants were in bed, and he said, in effect, “It’s too late. I can’t give you any bread. So don’t trouble me.” A. T. Robertson said in his comments on Luke 11 (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, II, p. 159) that, “Trouble me not,” literally means, “Stop furnishing troubles to me.” The man inside felt that his friend outside was trying to pass on his problem to him. And, actually, that is what he was doing. And so the man inside said, “The door is now shut,” meaning that it was “shut to stay shut. Oriental locks are not easy to unlock” (Robertson, *Ibid.*). And that is where the man inside wanted to leave it.

But did the Lord’s story end with the man outside going away without any food for his friend who was waiting for him at his house? No! We are not told about the rest of the conversation, but you can be sure that the man outside continued to plead with his friend inside until his friend inside told himself, and probably his children as well, “We are not going to get any sleep until I give him the bread that he wants.” And so did he order his servants to get the bread? No. Did he send one of his children to the door to give his friend bread? No. What did he do? Look at the Lord’s words in verse 8. (Read.)

The man got up himself and gave him at least the three loaves, and very possibly even more! Why? Because of their friendship? No! But because of his friend’s “importunity.”

What is “importunity”? The dictionary defines it as “troublesome pertinacity.” What does this mean? It means that the man outside made his appeal stronger and stronger. We would say today that the man outside would not take *no* for an answer.

If anything, the Greek word is even more forceful. It means that the man

outside was *shameless* in his request. He didn't care what time of night it was. He didn't care how much trouble it would have caused his friend to get up and get the bread for him. *He stayed until he got what he wanted!* The Lord didn't say whether or not the man inside had a wife, but he must have because he had children. I can imagine that his wife would have told him, "You have the wrong kind of friends."

You can't think about this story and all of the circumstances involved in it without feeling a sense of disgust at the man outside. Nobody was going to die if they didn't get something to eat before morning. But maybe the man who made the request knew that he would have the same problem in the morning: *there was no food in the house! And it would appear that his one hope that he could get bread was in getting it from the friend he had disturbed at midnight!*

This brings us to:

### III. THE PROMISES OF PRAYER (Luke 11:9-13).

Who do the characters in this parable represent? Well, you and I are represented by the man who had a friend come to his house, and he had nothing to set before him in the way of food. The friend he went to see to ask for help, represents God. And the shameless and unending, troublesome appeal that the man outside made of his friend inside, represents our praying.

In the pattern of prayer in the first four verses the disciples were taught to address God as their Father. In the parable God is pictured as their Friend. Both of these are very strong claims that we have on God. The Lord picked up on God as our Father in verses 11-13. (Read.)

Every father knows that what the Lord was saying is true. Any father who is worthy of the name would never give his son a stone if he asked for bread, etc.

My Dad never told us very much about his childhood, but my mother was full of stories about her childhood. And there was one story that she told us more than once, but she could never tell us without tears. She had one brother, and my mother was the oldest of five girls in the family. Every Christmas Eve they would hang up their stockings, and then come down early on Christmas morning to see what was in them. You can imagine how excited they all would have been. Well, on this particular Christmas they came down and all of the girls had gifts and fruit in their stockings

which made them all very happy. But when their brother took down his stocking, all there was in it was a plug of chewing tobacco! The parents had put gifts and fruit into his stocking as well, but some men in the family thought it would be fun to play a trick on my mother's brother, and so, without letting my mother's parents know what was going on, they came in and took the gifts and fruit, and left the plug of chewing tobacco. They returned the fruit and the gifts later in the day, but the damage was done, and my grandparents were irate! My mother never forgot her brother's disappointment, and she couldn't tell the story without crying.

When a father knows that his son is looking for fruit and gifts, he is not going to give him a plug of chewing tobacco. He would never have given him *that!* No father would give his son a stone when he wanted bread, nor a serpent if he wanted fish, nor a scorpion if he wanted an egg. You see, God has given fathers a heart like He has. And so we deduct from the lesser, that if we know how to give good gifts to our children, then the Lord said, how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

I said this morning that we do not have to pray for the Holy Spirit, and I said that because it is true. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us when we are saved. How can we explain what the Lord said here if that is the case?

I think there are two explanations:

- 1) Here in the Gospels we are in a time before the Holy Spirit was given to indwell every child of God. And so He may have been given when the people of God requested Him.
- 2) The other explanation can be that we are talking about prayer. And we know that the Holy Spirit has been given to us not only to teach us the Word, but to teach us to pray. And so I think that the Lord was very likely saying that it is the Holy Spirit Who teaches us to pray, and that our Father will give Him to teach us when we ask for His help.

I hope you noticed that I have passed over two of the verses in this passage: verses 9 and 10. These are promises our Lord has given us to encourage us to pray. When you read these verses think of the man outside of the house of his friend trying to persuade him at midnight to give him bread. He started by asking, and then he intensified his request by seeking, and then we have the knocking. The Lord Jesus was not teaching us that we are going to change the mind of God. We are not

going to change the will of God. But he was saying that we miss many blessings that otherwise we could have because we give up praying when we need to persevere. We pray for a while, but then stop because we assume that God is not going to answer us. To stop too soon is as bad as not praying at all.

God is our Father, and He is our Friend. Why is it that He usually makes us wait so that we get the idea that He is not going to answer us?

A few minutes ago I gave you a quotation from Augustine which was confusing and completely unsatisfactory in interpreting this parable. Let me give you a good comment now from Augustine as to why God delays the answers to many of our prayers. This is what he had to say:

When sometimes God gives tardily, He commends His gifts, He does not deny them... Things long desired, are more sweet when obtained; those quickly given, soon lose their value... God withholds his gifts for a time, that thou mayest learn to desire great things greatly (Quoted by Trench in *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, p. 334).

And along the same line Archbishop Trench said this:

Faith, patience, humility, are all called into exercise by these temporary denials. It is then seen who will pray always and not faint; and who will be daunted by the first ill-success; like the leopard, which, failing to attain its prey at the first spring, turns sullenly back, and cannot be induced to repeat the attempt (*Ibid.*).

**Concl:** I am sure that most of us have struggled with unanswered prayer.

We haven't been able to understand why the Lord has not saved some we are praying for, or what He does not bring back those who have strayed away. May this parable help us to understand more about the love of God, and more about the wisdom of God, as well as more about the power of prayer. And let us go to God as our Father and as our greatest Friend, laying our needs and the needs of others before Him, believing that while we cannot change the will of God, yet many times we quit too soon in our praying instead of persevering in prayer until the answer comes.

## THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

Luke 12:13-21

**Intro:** If you will read the first twelve verses of Luke 12, you will find that the Lord had been speaking to such a large crowd that they were actually walking on each other. Furthermore, in the words of the Lord which followed, you will find words as solemn as our Lord ever spoke here on earth. He was warning them about their teachers, the Pharisees. And then He told them Who it was that they should fear. See verse 5. After that He spoke of confessing Him before men, and the dire consequences of failing to do so. The report that Luke gave us here concluded with a warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and that they should not worry about what they would say when they were brought before magistrates and other authorities.

But there was a man in the crowd who apparently did not hear a word that the Lord had to say; he was too bothered about a family problem that he was facing. And he called out to the Lord, asking the Lord to speak to his brother about dividing their inheritance.

Those of us who speak are not unfamiliar with such a situation--where someone will speak out with a problem or a question which has nothing to do with the message that has been given. People can come to church with some problem in their minds, and, as far as profiting from the message which they have heard, they might as well have stayed home. But it is interesting to see how the Lord handled this.

He refused to be drawn into this controversy. There were authorities even in those days which could settle a dispute like this, and the Lord said that He was not one of them. It is true that the Apostle Paul taught that matters like this among believers should be settled by the church, and that it is better to be defrauded than defraud one who was a brother in Christ. *But there is no evidence that the man who called out his problem, was a believer.* So the Lord did the right thing in referring him to the judges of that day.

But the Lord did not leave the man without any answer at all. Instead, He issued:

### I. A WARNING (Luke 12:15).

Note from verse 1 of this chapter that what the Lord had said to the crowd was in the form of a warning. See the word "beware." And here in the

fifteenth verse the Lord issued another warning. Actually the Lord used different words. Both words speak of a warning, but the difference seems to be that in verse 1 the Lord was warning them to pay careful attention to what their teachers were saying because only then would they be able to pick up the error of their teaching. In verse 15 the thought is of guarding yourself against an enemy *within*, in this case, *the lust of the flesh*.

Obviously this man was not listening carefully to the Lord, and it is equally evident that he was not aware of some dangers which were present in his own heart. Of the two, we are probably in greater danger from the enemy in our own hearts.

Trench pointed out that the Lord did not chide the man for his unrighteousness. He did not say that the man was not entitled to a part of the inheritance. But He rebuke him because of his covetousness. He knew that the man was motivated by greed and selfishness. It is amazing what reactions can be brought out of our hearts where money is involved-- whether that be in land, or possessions, or whatever it might be. I have seen people practically undergo a change in personality when it comes to dividing up an inheritance. Families can be broken apart, and sometimes those broken relationships are never made right. How important it is to hear what the Lord had to say here because we are all susceptible to this same problem. And the Lord added, "For a man's life consisteth not..." It was as though the Lord had said, "A large bank account does not assure you of a long life." Money is necessary for all of us to give us houses in which to live, and to buy clothes to wear, and food to eat. It is not money that is the root of all kinds of evil, but the love of money. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:10. And "the love of money" is covetousness. We can covet other things, but usually in coveting money is involved somewhere along the line.

I remember hearing it said when President John Kennedy was assassinated that with all of the millions the Kennedys had, they could not extend the life of the President one second! More money does not mean more years. So a man's life is not determined by the abundance of what he possesses. I heard old Dr. DeHaan who was on the radio many years, teaching the Word, say on one occasion that when the Lord gets ready to take us out of this life, all of the pills in the world are not going to keep us here. But in spite of the fact that we all know this, we are still tempted by the possibility of getting more money. And Paul told Timothy that men will even forsake the faith so strong is the sin of covetousness in our hearts. People here in Oregon and throughout our country are jamming the casinos, hoping to strike it rich, because the sin of covetousness has

enslaved them. And even if they were to win millions in the casino, or in the lottery, it would do nothing to extend their lives. But it does deaden their minds to any thought that there is life beyond death and the grave.

— This is a very important warning that the people of the United States need to hear, and you find it in the Word of God.

Now to emphasize the truth and the importance of what the Lord was saying, He told the man (and the crowd all around him--notice “them” in verse 15, and again in verse 16)--He told the man *a parable*. It has been called:

## **II. THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL (Luke 12:16-21).**

— The words “rich” and “fool” do not always go together. In fact, there are things about this rich man in the parable which do not indicate that he was a “fool” in everything. We can assume that he was a hard worker. On this particular occasion, as it often happens, God had blessed him with an abundant harvest--evidently more than he usually had. It has been a good year. We don't know anything about this man before this particular year, but evidently he had worked hard year after year, and had amassed considerable wealth. But when this year came, he started thinking along another line.

He became very concerned because he did not have the barn space in which to store the fruits of his harvest. Note the Lord's words, that this man “thought within himself.” He was not thinking of how he might help others, and there was surely not idea that the Lord had anything to do with his harvest, and that he might honor the Lord in some way. But we can assume that this man was a Jew, and that he knew what was required in bringing the firstfruits to the Lord. But there is no suggestion here that he was even thinking along that line.

So what did he decide to do?

He talks to himself, actually to his “soul.” You see, he was speaking to that part of his being which needed God in the worst way. Do you remember the words of our Lord on another occasion when he said what we find recorded in Mark 8, beginning with verse 34:

— 34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?  
(Mark 8:34-37).

We play with the welfare of our souls instead of realizing what our greatest need is. And in this man's case it led to a disaster from which he would never recover.

What did he say to his soul? Read verse 19. Notice that he was talking about "many years." Perhaps at his age he thought he still had many years ahead of him. And so he could retire, enjoy good food, drink, to his heart's content, and have a good time as the world thinks of a good time.

But what did God say? Read verse 20. Contrast "I will say" with, "But God said." Long before them Solomon had written under the direction of the Holy Spirit,

There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand (Prov. 19:21).

It really doesn't make any difference what we say, nor how we may plan, if we are saying one thing, but God is saying something else. This rich man was thinking in terms of "many years"; God had plans for that very night. *He would be gone before the sun arose the next morning!*

And the Lord asked a question: "Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Doesn't this remind you of what Solomon wrote in Ecc. 2:18-19?

18 Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

The rich man couldn't take a single thing with him. He came into the world without anything, and he would go out the same way. The tragedy is that he went out with great riches which he had to leave beyond, but he went out without God and without Christ into eternal torment.

What was his mistake? His mistake was that he was so comfortable in this life that he made no preparation for the next. And even in this he



failed to acknowledge the goodness of God in providing so abundantly for him. He was rich in worldly goods, but “not rich toward God.”

**Concl:** We all need to remember the exhortation which comes toward the close of the book of Hebrews. Let me read for you Heb. 13:5, 6:

5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

I am sure that the Lord was not condemning thrift, that He was not saying it is wrong for us to think about the future and provide for it as best we can. But covetousness is usually caused by a failure to trust the Lord as we should. Let me close by reading for you the words our Lord spoke immediately after He told this parable. This shows how we can guard ourselves against a covetous heart and spare ourselves all of the misery that people experience when money is their God instead of God being their God. If I am right in assuming that this man was a Jew, and I believe he was, then it is doubly tragic that he showed a gross ignorance of the very words which could have turned his life toward God and toward Christ, and then toward others, instead of toward himself. Listen as I read Luke 12:22-31. “No thought” means *no anxious thought*.

May the Lord spare us from being covetous, and may He strengthen our faith that just as He has provided for us so wonderfully in the past, He will not fail us in the future. We may not have all that we would like to have, but He will give us what we need. And what He withholds is that which possibly would do us more harm than good.

## FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS

Luke 12:35-48

**Intro:** This parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants follows the parable that we had the last time we were together on Sunday evening: the parable of the rich fool. The two parables stand in contrast with each other, but it is interesting to compare the two.

The parable of the rich fool has to do with one who was in the position of a master; the parables that we are considering tonight have to do with servants. The parable of the rich fool has to do with earth; the emphasis in the parable, or parables, of the servants has or have to do with the coming of the Lord and heaven. The two parables present to us two events over which we have no control, but two over which the Lord has complete control: death, and the coming of the Lord. We don't know when we are going to die, just that we are going to die. Neither do we know when the Lord will come, just that He is coming. The emphasis in the parable of the rich fool has to do with where our treasure is. The emphasis in the parables we will look at tonight has to do with what we are doing while we wait for the coming of the Lord. Both parables are very important, and very instructive for all of us.

The rich fool lived like he was going to live forever. He had no thought of death, nor of what was coming after death. He lived like he was in complete control of his circumstances, and that just because he planned to build new barns, he would be able to build them, and then to fill them so he could enjoy himself for "many years." But God ended it all suddenly and unexpectedly in one night. In the words which Luke has given us following that parable we are told that we are not to be consumed with worry about what we are to eat and drink, but we are to seek God's kingdom, resting in the fact that God will take care of us. The person who lays up treasure on earth, but "is not rich toward God," is the greatest of fools. The rich man needed to remember what Paul told Timothy about money in 1 Tim. 6:7:

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

Now let us look at the parable(s) of the faithful and unfaithful servants.

We can actually divide our text (Luke 12:35-48) into three parts:

1) The first has to do with a master, or lord, who has gone to a wedding. His servants do not know when he will return, only that he will return. The servants are admonished to watch. We see this in vv. 35-38.

2) The second has to do with a master who has his house broken into. If he had known when the thief had come, he would have *watched* and not allowed his house to be broken into. This is the shortest of the three, and really occupies only one verse, 39. The exhortation of verse 40 applies to both of the first parables.

3) The third and last has to do with two situations: that of a faithful servant who has been left as a steward of his master's household, and who is carrying out his master's requirements. This is in verses 41-44, prompted as we can see by Peter's question. This is followed by the account of an unfaithful servant--with two possibilities: one who knew his master's will, and the other who did not.

In all three of these there is uncertainty about events which either would or could take place, but the emphasis is upon being prepared for them. Let us look at each account.

### **I. THE SERVANTS WHOSE MASTER HAD GONE TO A WEDDING (Luke 12:35-38).**

The theme for the servants is readiness and watchfulness. Their robes need to be tucked in to their belts so that they can move freely about and get their work done, and their lamps need to be burning so they can clearly see what they have to do. And they must be ready for their lord regardless of what time of the day or night he returns. The assumption from verse 38 is that he will be coming at night. Hendriksen suggested that the first watch of the night is not mentioned because the wedding would have still been going on at that time. Thus, the servants would know the approximate time that their lord was coming, but not the exact time. So they were to remain in readiness for him.

If the master comes and finds them ready and waiting, so that he is not even delayed at the door, the master is pictured in the parable as being so delighted that he becomes a servant to his servants to feed them who have served him so diligently and well.

The lesson is obvious. We know that the Lord is coming, but we do not know when. But we must be busy about what He has given us to do so that we will have no regrets when He comes. He will find us waiting for Him up to the very moment that He comes. And we can expect from our Lord what servants normally would never expect from an earthly and human lord--our Lord will serve us to show His delight in our faithfulness in serving Him. Remember what Paul said about himself in the first two verses of 1 Corinthians 4:

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

- How the Lord rewards us here or hereafter, is entirely in His hands. What we need to be concerned about is *our faithfulness to Him and the work that He has given us to do*. It certainly follows that the more we expect our Lord, the greater faithfulness and diligence we will exercise in what He has given us to do until He comes.

What the meaning of the master serving his servants is, I frankly don't know, but we can be sure that those who are faithful are in for some great surprises when the Lord comes. We as servants face the same uncertainty regarding life that the rich fool faced: death. But that is not to be our concern. We are to serve as those who are expectantly waiting for their lord.

But let us go on to the second parable.

## **II. THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE AND THE THIEF (Luke 12:39).**

- “The goodman of the house” is the head of the family, or the master of the house. It was his responsibility to protect his home and his family. The possibility of a thief coming was always there, even in those days, and he needed to be prepared for that eventuality. How he would be prepared, is not the point. The point is that he needed to be ready whenever a thief might come, either day or night.

One afternoon over ten years ago a thief came to our home when we were away. He broke into our basement, and took Lucille's silverware, a lot of irreplaceable things which were of sentimental value to her and to me. They went all over our house and took whatever they wanted. Many of our neighbors had been robbed, but somehow I felt that the Lord would never let us be robbed. I was wrong, and I misinterpreted what was taking place in our neighborhood. Instead of thinking that we could not be robbed, I should have prepared for that possibility. The robbery took place on the first day of our vacation as we had made two hospital calls, but I can assure you that we took immediate steps to get a burglar alarm installed. The company could not do it for two weeks, and so it was two weeks before we left the house again. The police told us that thieves look for certain things. They get what they go after, and then inform their fellow-thieves of things they have seen in a house so that the second

group of thieves can come and get what they want.

So I know the meaning of Luke 12:39. It was my fault that the thieves were able to do what they did. It was my responsibility to make our home as secure against thieves as I could, and I failed to do it.

We all live with the same possibility of being robbed. It is happening to people every day in the city of Portland. It has happened to some of you. We can't always avoid it. We still have to trust the Lord. But we need to take every precaution that we can.

Now isn't it interesting that the Lord likens Himself to a thief. It does not mean that He is a thief, but that we are just as incapable of telling when He is coming as we would be to tell when a thief is coming. In fact, the Lord said that He would come at an hour when we would not think that He would come. We read in Matt. 24:44,

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

So again, we need to be ready.

Now the third part of this extended parable.

### **III. THE FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS (Luke 12:41-48).**

This part of the parable, or this additional parable, however it is that we should look at it, was introduced by Peter's question. (Read Luke 12:41.)

What the Lord had been saying implied that some would be ready and waiting for the Lord to return, but others would not. To whom was the Lord speaking? Was there a warning in this for the disciples? Surely we must say that there was, especially when we read in verse 22 of this chapter, "And He said unto His disciples." The Apostle John indicated in 1 John 2:28 that it is possible that some will "be ashamed before Him at His coming." So these parables were directed, it seems, more to the disciples than to anyone else.

In verses 42-44 we see that this servant was called faithful and wise, and that he was a most trusted servant, *a steward*, whose responsibility it was to take care of the entire household of his master. How blessed he will be if his master comes and finds that he has done all that he was appointed to do! You parents know the feeling that would have been in this master's heart if you have left your children with a babysitter to find, when you

returned, that your instructions had been carried out with the same care and concern that you would have taken care of your children if you had been there. Such a servant would be worthy of greater responsibility, and would be given it.

This parable suggests that there is going to be a connection between the way we do our work here on earth and the responsibilities we will have in heaven. Such a master as we have depicted in this parable could safely turn over all that he had to such a steward.

But what if the opposite would be the case?

What if the servant felt that his master could not come soon, and so he started to abuse his fellow-menservants and maidservants? The master could very well come and catch him doing what he should *never* have done.

What did this warning mean? Was the Lord teaching that it would be possible for a servant finally to be lost? No, He was not teaching that. But this surely was a wake-up call to all who were listening. Remember that Judas was there. There are always those who think that they are the people of God, the servants of our Lord, who in reality are not! And their perverse behavior can be an indication that they are not the Lord's. So the Lord may have been saying this to awaken some that they were not true servants of the Lord, and that they needed to repent and be saved.

Verses 47-48 deal with another situation: One servant who knew his lord's will, but did not do it. This is in verse 47. The second did not know his lord's will, and so did not do it. Both will be punished--the first with "many stripes," the second, with "few stripes." The Lord is righteous even when it comes to the execution of judgment. And this would certainly be a warning to all true servants of the Lord. And it is not out-of-step with the teaching of the epistles. For example, cf. 1 Cor. 3:9-15:  
1 Cor 3:9-15

9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, sil-

ver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

**Concl:** How important it is for us to learn the lessons of these parables! The Lord is coming. We do not know when He will come, but we know that He is coming. He has given each one of us work to do. It might be with the church as a whole. It certainly is with our families. Many of you have jobs which occupy your time during the week. You think of your own situation. Wherever you are, even you children, as servants of the Lord. The way you do your school work is related to what we have in these parables. Are you doing your work, whatever it might be, the way you would want to be doing it if the Lord were to come tonight. Remember that it was to those who were bondservants that the Apostle Paul said these words which are recorded for us in Col. 3:22-25:

22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

So let us take the message of these parables to heart. The Lord is coming. He may come tonight, or tomorrow, or the next day. He can come at any time. Let us be ready, and working, and expecting Him at any time. And let us be among those who are faithful to the Lord, looking for His blessing as the Lord predicted it in another parable dealing with the same truths we have been considering tonight. It was to a servant that His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matt. 25:21).

None of us knows how long we will live, and none of us knows when the Lord will come. So let us not live like we will be here forever, and that

there is no life to come, nor let us live carelessly as though the Lord will not come tonight, or some time very soon. Let us serve that Lord faithfully in whatever He has given us to do so that when He comes, He will find us doing His will from our hearts, and not at all surprised when we first see our Lord face to face.



## THE BARREN FIG TREE

Luke 13:1-10

**Intro:** The background of our parable is given in the five verses which go before it. It amounted to an attempt on the part of people in Israel in our Lord's day to interpret current events. There were people present, Israelites, who brought the news to our Lord of a terrible tragedy which had recently taken place. Pilate had killed many Galileans as they were bringing their sacrifices to the Lord. Was it all just a coincidence that those people were at the wrong place at the worst possible time? Is it just a fact of life on this earth that occasionally bad things happen, and we just have to cope with them when they come? Or was there more to it than that? Is it possible that God was in it all, and that God was speaking to this nation which prided itself on its religion, and yet was living in rebellion to God?

There is much in Scripture about God's dealings with Israel, before and during and after the time of Christ, as well as His dealings with other nations, which is very instructive for our day. In our country we are faced daily with tragedies taking place throughout our nation. When we were in Orlando, listening to the local news was like listening to the news in Portland--murders, rapes, violence of various kinds, robberies, arson, and the like. When we were in North Carolina visiting the Phillips family, there was evidence everywhere of the destruction caused by the hurricanes which have torn through that country this year. You can't board an airplane these days without being reminded of terrorism. Rain and flooding which accompanies storms wipes out crops and many farmers have been ruined by what has happened. How are we to explain such events.

We have an example in Scripture when God moved against the Egyptians in the days of Moses. Moses tried to get Pharaoh to believe that the plagues were of God, but he stubbornly refused to listen. The plagues got increasingly worse until Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" (Ex. 10:7). God was moving against Pharaoh, but Pharaoh was putting the wrong interpretation on what was happening until finally he, along with thousands of other Egyptians, paid for his stupidity with the loss of their firstborn sons.

The media is always trying to tell us what to think, but when it comes to the disasters which come upon us, the best they can do is to tell us what

has happened, but they have no explanation. The solutions that most of our counselors give to families where some member has been killed in an earthquake, or fire, or an accident, is ridiculous. I don't know that I have ever heard it suggested on TV that God has any purpose in the things that are happening. We don't even give Him the credit for being the Wonderful Counselor that He is.

One of Solomon's proverbs tells us this:

As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come (Proverbs 26:2).

This is the way it is translated in the NKJV:

Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight.

The substance of what Solomon was saying is that where there is a curse of any kind, *there is a cause*. We may not be able to tell the full scope of it, but in the explosion of TWA Flight 800 there is a message for every person on the face of the earth, and especially for Americans. We need to see the hand of the Lord in everything.

In our text we see that there had been:

## **I. TWO RECENT CATASTROPHES (Luke 13:1, 2, 4).**

### **A. The death of certain Galileans (Luke 13:1, 2).**

Various explanations have been put forward of what actually happened when Pilate, ordering his soldiers, had killed certain Galileans while they were offering their sacrifices. And since the Galileans were really under Herod, it is supposed by some that this was the time when Pilate and Herod became enemies, as we are told in Luke 23:12. There were certain Galileans who were bitter enemies of Rome, and they may have been violating some restriction which Rome had laid upon them. The fact is that we don't know the full story, and we don't need to know the full story. The other fact is that this event had evidently attracted national attention, and the chief interpretation that had been placed upon it was that these had to have been the worst of all of the Galileans for such a thing to happen to them while they were preparing to worship God. And this is the question that the Lord asked the people who had brought the news to Him.

### **B. The death of those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell (Luke 13:4).**

This tower, as far as we know, was near the pool of Siloam, which was also called the pool of Bethesda. Bishop Lightfoot, a reliable NT scholar, surmises that at least some of the eighteen people who were killed were people too weak to get down into the pool when the angel troubled the water, and so very likely some of them and their families were killed. This would have been an entirely different situation from the first tragedy in which Galileans were involved. Did this tragedy happen to them because at the time they were the most wicked people in Jerusalem? That is the way most people were evidently thinking. And you can see that this would make other people smug that it did not happen to them, and would give them a false sense of security.

We go from this to:

## **II. THE LORD'S EXPLANATION OF THE EVENTS (Luke 13:3, 5).**

The Lord gave the same explanation to both events. It was a warning to the whole nation of Israel. As a nation they were living in rebellion against God. The Lord brought these calamities involving a relatively small number of people to issue a warning to the whole nation. The word "likewise" means that similar judgments would come in the future which would mark the destruction of the nation as a whole.

Putting this into the context of our own times, did the destruction that we witness in North Carolina and other places along the east coast mean that those are the states where the worst people in America live? Does it mean that if you are a farmer and your crops are wiped out by flooding, that you are one of the worst farmers in all of America? Did the people who died on TWA Flight 800 die because they were among the worst people in America, and that God was judging them for their sins? We can't tell to what extent God may have been dealing with some people on board, but the point is that all of these disasters which we are presently experiencing in our own nation are a warning to the whole nation. In fact, they are a warning to the whole world. God is speaking, and if we as a nation do not hear, His voice in judgment will get louder and louder and louder! What is the message? Remember that it is the Lord Jesus Who was speaking: "I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Even the synagogue itself was evidence of the spiritual declension of Israel. The Jews were worshipping God the way they chose to worship Him. And they were skirting the Law as often as they could, and as much

as they could. Our Lord said that God was calling the nation to repentance. They needed to confess and forsake their sins, and turn to the Lord. Any lesser explanation of these tragedies fell far short of the purpose of God.

Now we come to our parable: the parable of the barren fig tree.

### **III. THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE (Luke 13:6-10).**

(Read the parable, and notice especially where the Lord was when He spoke this parable--"in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.")

This "fig tree" obviously represented the nation Israel. A. B. Bruce in his commentary says that a vine (Isa. 5:1-7) is more attractive than a fig tree, and that the Lord used the fig tree rather than the vine to lower the pride of His hearers.

Anyway, a man had a vineyard. In it he planted a fig tree. It was there by his choice, and the vineyard would have been set apart from everything around it to protect it for its owner. But when the owner came three years in succession to get figs from the fig tree, he found it without any figs every time! And so he told the dresser of his vineyard, "Cut it down!" The owner could not see any purpose in allowing the tree to occupy space in the vineyard if it were not going to produce fruit. That is why it was there--to produce figs.

But then the dresser of the vineyard pled with the owner for another year. He promised to dig around it, fertilize it, and then see if it would be fruitful. If it were not, then he would agree that it ought to be cut down.

That is where the parable ended. We are not told what happened. We do know that a few years after the Lord went back to heaven, Jerusalem was destroyed. And this may be what the Lord was anticipating. Even His ministry to His people did not change their ways, and did not keep them from their sins.

Some say that the three years represent the three years of our Lord's ministry, but we have to recognize that Israel was planted in God's vineyard long before our Lord came to earth. Personally I prefer to think that the Lord was indicating that after three years of no fruit, you could assume that it was a barren tree which would never be fruitful. But by the extension of the one year, we have a wonderful illustration of the patience and the mercy of our Lord.

Do we have here in the pleading of the dresser of the vineyard a picture of the intercessory work of our Lord? Is this an illustration of what the Lord would pray from the Cross in just a short time after He gave this parable, when He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"? See Luke 23:34.

**Concl:** What, then, are we to learn from this parable? I want to suggest some lessons it gives us about man, in this case, Israelites, but the application can be made to all nations and to all times. Then I will suggest what this parable teaches us about God and about our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concerning man:

- 1) We see evidence of His spiritual blindness.
- 2) We see evidence of His pride.
- 3) We see evidence of His wickedness.

Concerning God:

- 1) We see evidence of His sovereignty.
- 2) We see evidence of His wrath.
- 3) We see evidence of His mercy and His grace.

Let us be sure that we make the application to our own lives. Every disaster that hits our country is a call for us to see the hand of God in what is happening, and not to accuse others, but to examine our own hearts to make sure that we are living to please and glorify God. Our own nation is ripe for judgment. God has been speaking to us in all of the terrible things that have been happening. There is no doubt but that He is speaking to our nation. We are a people who want to have things go our way, and one of the purposes of many in power is to do away with all authority which tells us what we need to do. It is probably later than we think, but possibly God will yet extend mercy to us and give us added time to show that our main purpose is to do His will.

*Repent* is the word for the hour. Sinners need to repent and turn to Christ, believing in Him for the forgiveness of their sins and for the gift of eternal life. But we who know the Lord need to repent as well. The time may come very soon when it will cost us something to stand for the truth and for righteousness. Let the Bible explain for us what God is doing, and let us seek His mercy if we have become careless about our own obedience to Him. He is righteous, but, thank God, He is also merciful.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD THEN AND NOW

Luke 13:18-30

**Intro:** In Matthew 13 we are given seven parables which were called by the Lord parables which revealed “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11). Of these seven Mark included only two: the parable of the sower and the parable of the mustard seed. In addition he included one that is not in any of the other three Gospels: the parable of the growing corn (Mark 4:26-29). Luke also includes three parables that are found in Matthew 13: the parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-15)--which we have already considered, and the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven which we are considering tonight.

In Luke’s account of the parable of the sower, he also said it revealed “the mysteries of the kingdom, not “of heaven,” as Matthew said, but of “the kingdom of God.” This has led many commentators to say that *the kingdom of heaven* is one thing, while *the kingdom of God* is something else. But the fact that the parables are the same seems to suggest that there are times when the kingdom of God is called that, and at other times the same kingdom is called the kingdom of heaven. I personally believe that Matthew 19:23, 24 indicates that. Here the Lord said,

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into **the kingdom of heaven.**

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into **the kingdom of God.**

Since the kingdom of heaven in the Gospels is only used in Matthew’s Gospel, I am inclined to believe that the term has a Jewish emphasis, and that the two terms, “of heaven,” and “of God,” often mean the same thing. They speak of the present manifestation of God’s work in the world. Sometimes it the kingdom is spoken of as a perfect kingdom, as in our Lord’s words to Nicodemus, that unless he was born again he could not see nor enter in the Kingdom of God. There the term is used for salvation. But as in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Matt.), or the kingdom of God (Mark and Luke), there definitely is evil involved. Our Lord was describing the work of the Lord as it appeared on earth *then*, and we can safely assume that the same is true of the work of the Lord *now*.

We all know that there is another way in which the word kingdom is used in Scripture, and that has to do with a literal kingdom which will be established on the earth when our Lord comes to reign. An example of

this usage would be Rev. 11:15:

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The word *mystery*, or *mysteries*, is a word which our Lord used to describe truth which had not been previously revealed. And while some of the truths in the NT which are called *mysteries* are evident to some extent in the OT, yet they became clearer and more evident in the NT. The Apostle Paul's statement in Eph. 3:3-6, even about Christ, seems to indicate this:

- 3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
- 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
- 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, **as it is now revealed** unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
- 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Notice the words, "as it is now revealed." We have the suggestion in the OT of many truths which are more clearly and completely revealed in the NT, and it is this which the parables of the mysteries of the kingdom have to do.

One thing that is apparent in the parables of the mysteries of the kingdom is that there is evidence of that which is both good and bad in the kingdom. So obviously they cannot be speaking of salvation as such, but of those who *profess to be saved*, or who *claim that they are the people of God*. We saw this in the parable of the sower. The seed was sown. It fell into four kinds of soil representing four different responses to the Gospel, but out of the four only one was genuine. We have the same characteristics in both of the parables that we have tonight.

### **I. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED (Luke 8:18-19).**

The parable of the mustard seed tells about a very small seed which grew into a very large tree, and the birds of the air lodged in it. Now if we remember the parable of the sower, we learned that the birds which picked up the seed represent the work of the Devil who snatches the Word away before it has a chance to take root. So you have good and bad in the kingdom as it is represented in the kingdom of the mustard seed.

## II. THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN (Luke 13:20-21).

We see the same in the parable of the leaven. This seems to be the one place that expositors have been inclined to treat leaven as good. But leaven was not allowed in most of the offerings of the children of Israel. They had to clear leaven out of their houses during the Passover.

When we come to the NT we find the same emphasis. Cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-8:

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

And then when the Apostle Paul was rebuking the Galatian churches for their legalism, their return to the Law, this is what he wrote in Gal. 5:7-9:

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

So very clearly the Apostle Paul used leaven to represent evil. But this should not bother us if we realize that the Lord was speaking about what could be expected of the church, the professing church, in the days to come.

This had always been a problem in Israel. We read about the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt. We know that there were godly kings in Israel throughout her history, but there were also godly kings. There were good prophets, but there were also false prophets. Even among the disciples there were eleven who knew the Lord, but one who did not. And the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount that in the day when men would stand before Him they would claim to have preached in His Name, and to have cast out demons, and to have done many wonderful works, but that He would turn to them and say, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23). *But the point I am making is that they claimed to be the people of God, but they were not.* We have the kingdom presented to us, the work that claims to be the work of the Lord, as it has appeared from that day until this, from then until now. And so the two parables basically teach the same thing, and this explains why



Luke was led to put them together. In its present form that which claims to be the work of the Lord, or the kingdom of God, has not been perfected. God's part is perfect, but there are those, we know, who claim to belong to the Lord, who claim to be Christians, but who are not! I was speaking this morning about what professing Christians are seeking to do to build up attendance in their churches. And often that which is being omitted is the proclamation of the true Gospel of the grace of God.

But let us think for just a few moments about what these two parables have in common.

### **III. COMMON FEATURES ABOUT BOTH PARABLES.**

#### **A. Both parables speak of the kingdom of God, or heaven, as having an insignificant beginning.**

A grain of mustard seed is very small, but often it will produce a tree which is capable not only of supporting birds, but of supporting human beings who climb into it. One would never have imagined that what was initiated with the birth of Jesus Christ in such lowly circumstances would ultimately result in the world-wide kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Devil was aware of it, but the Roman government was not. Pilate wanted to let our Lord go, but the Jews demanded His death. Nevertheless, God raised His Son from the dead, and today we see the Gospel spread throughout the world. "Three measure of meal" is not much meal. But it would be like the five loaves and two fish which the Lord took to feed the five thousand men, plus the women and children. However, part of its size is due to the action of the leaven upon it. When we speak today of how many Christians there are in the world, we might start by the numbers of church members or adherents there are, but then we always have to account for the fact that not everyone in the church is saved.

So this leads to a second point:

#### **B. The impurity of the kingdom in its present form.**

Let me say again that what God does in the hearts of people is always a good work, and ultimately will be a perfect work. But the Devil has from the beginning of time sought to contaminate the work of the Lord, and he has done an amazing job. If it were not for the fact that he has to operate within the limits of the will of God for him, the church would have been destroyed long ago. The mixture of good and evil in the professing

church has probably done more than anything else to lessen the light that should be shining forth from the kingdom of God. But in spite of all that the Devil and unregenerate people have done, the Lord's work will prevail. Ultimately the tares will be removed. The bad fish will be taken out, and the good gathered into vessels (according to our Lord's last parable in this series as recorded in Matthew 13). The birds will be driven away, and the leaven will be destroyed.

The outcome is described for us in verses 22 through 30 here in Luke 13. (Read.)

So we can see that there are going to be many people who will weep and gnash their teeth when they learn that they are not saved, and will be shut out forever from the kingdom of God when God purges it of all of those who do not know Him.

**Concl:** In the light of all that we have seen, what is our responsibility today? I think we all know that the same conditions exist today in the church that existed in Israel in our Lord's day, and even before. Nicodemus came to the Lord because although he was "a ruler of the Jews," looked upon as one of their spiritual leaders, yet even he didn't know the Lord. Saul of Tarsus was a very religious man, but he was not saved until the Lord struck him down on the road to Damascus. And it is clear that millions of people in our own country are church members, but are not saved--and do not profess to be. But they call themselves Christians.

What is our responsibility?

- 1) Let us make sure that we have really entered into the kingdom of God through the new birth. As I said this morning, it is not enough to join a church, or to be baptized, or to be confirmed, or to give our money. We need to be saved.

But there are two other thing that we must do:

- 2) We need through prayer and through the teaching of the Word to make as sure as we can that leaven is removed from us. There are two ways that that can be done: a) To preach the Gospel faithfully in the hope that all who are a part of our work really belong to the Lord. b) We must be careful never to let any false teaching enter in. I get mail all of the time from people who have their own ideas about what the church should be doing. And there are liberal churches which would gladly have us join with them in the things that they are doing, but we couldn't do it without denying our Lord and the Word which He has given us. We are seeing continual attacks today against the Word of God, but we must do as many have done before us, not only to preach

the Word, but to live lives which will show to the world that the Lord is the One they need if they are ever to come to God, and if they are ever to be delivered from their sins.

## A LESSON IN HUMILITY

Luke 14:1-11

**Intro:** The purpose of this parable is stated in verse 11. (Read.) So it is  
A LESSON IN HUMILITY.

This same verse appears two other times in the Gospels. Please turn to Luke 18, verse 14. This comes at the end of a parable that we will be considering later in going through the parables of our Lord that are found in the Gospel of Luke. It is the parable of the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the temple to pray. Read Luke 18:9-14.

The other occurrence of this verse is found in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 23, verse 12. This comes at the beginning of a chapter in which our Lord was denouncing the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of the Jews. Read Matt. 23:1-12.

Looking at the three, we have three different situations, but it is interesting that Pharisees were involved in all three. The two in the Gospel of Luke appear in connection with parables which our Lord taught. The first had to do with the behavior of people at a social occasion. The second had to do with two men who went to the temple to pray. The one in Matthew has to do with the way in which the scribes and Pharisees were serving God. So the situation in each case was different, but the problem was the same. The problem was pride.

I have mentioned to some of you that, in reading through the Prophets of the OT this year, I have been impressed with the fact that when the prophets spoke of the reason for God's judgment upon the nations, and even upon His people, Israel and Judah, the main reason given for their judgment is *pride!* If that word is not used we have words like *arrogance*, or *haughtiness*, but they all mean the same thing. It is a common affliction with all of us, Jew and Gentile, men and women, old people and children. King David, in Psalm 58:3 had this to say about children:

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray  
as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

Why do we lie? We lie to cover up something which we have done which would make people think less of us, or sometimes we like to make people think that we are better than we are. Lying is definitely a form of pride.

Pride is one of the most prominent marks of sin, and it is in all of us, and it never really leaves us. And whatever situation we might be in, the

possibility is great that, in some way, we will show that we are proud. And the most shameful thing about us is the way in which pride appears even in our relationship with the Lord. The scribes and Pharisees were not believers as a rule, but they were looked upon by the people of Israel as their guides and examples in things having to do with God. And yet their service was always contaminated with their pride. Instead of being examples of what the people should have been, they illustrated what the people should not be!

Tonight I want to consider with you the parable in Luke 14, the first of three parables, and, as always, we need to look at the situation which existed when the Lord spoke the parable.

So let us look first at:

### **I. THE SETTING OF THE PARABLE (Luke 14:1-6).**

The Lord had evidently been invited into the home of one of the Pharisees, and there were others who were invited as well. This happened to the Lord several times during His ministry. The Pharisee who invited the Lord may have been interested in hearing more of our Lord's teaching. We are not told. But anyway the Lord was there, and the setting would suggest that it was by invitation. He was there to eat a meal. And we are told that it was on the Sabbath Day.

As was often the case, it seems that those who received an invitation did not know who else was being invited. And so it must have been a surprise that a man afflicted with dropsy was there. From what I have been able to learn, this is what we call *edema*, the condition a person can have when there is an unusual amount of fluid in the body. It can be caused when the heart or kidneys or liver is not functioning properly, and can only be cured when the particular organ causing the fluid retention is cured. But this evidently made the Pharisees uncomfortable, and yet this man must have also had an invitation. With the Lord, however, this was an opportunity for ministry. The big problem was that it was on the Sabbath, and our Lord had been condemned many times before when He healed on the Sabbath because to the leaders of the Jews this was considered as working.

The Lord was very conscious of the fact, as we are told in verse 1, that those who were present were watching Him. And so He asked the lawyers and Pharisees who were present, the question we have in verse 3. (Read.)

Nobody answered. And so the Lord healed the man, and the man then went away. Why he went, we do not know. It may have been to tell his family and friends about the wonderful thing the Lord had done for him.

— But then the Lord asked another question. (Read v. 5.) You will find this same question in Luke 13:11-17. (Read.) This situation came up many times in our Lord's ministry. The lawyers and Pharisees did not answer this question because they knew that, if they did, they would have to admit that they would rescue one of their animals if it fell into a pit on the Sabbath Day. But to say so would have ruined their case against the Lord, and they were too proud to put themselves in a bad light. Notice here that our pride makes hypocrites out of us.

At this point the Lord told what has been called,

## **II. THE PARABLE OF THE PROUD GUEST (Luke 14:8-11).**

The lawyers and Pharisees who were there had been watching the Lord, but this parable shows that the Lord had been watching them, too. And what He saw was the basis for the parable which He gave to them.

— The dinner which our Lord described was a wedding dinner (as the two following parables show). But what often happens at a wedding dinner had evidently happened at the dinner to which the Lord in this case had been invited. There were always places for honored guests, and then there were places with no particular honor attached to them. Some must have come early to get an honored seat, and others, although they came later, were interested in getting into one of those places of honor. That would probably compare with being at the head table in our day, although there were probably more seats of honor in their dinners than we have in ours. Campbell Morgan in his commentary on Luke says that there was an honored seat at each table.

Now suppose that the host was getting ready to serve, and in comes a guest, an honored guest, and all of the honored places had been taken. Rather than insult one who was truly honored, the host would go to a person who was occupying a place of honor, and ask him to take a lower place. For this to happen would be a shame to the man who was asked to move. And so the Lord said that when you are invited to a wedding dinner, take the lowest place so that, if you are asked to move at all, you will be asked to take a higher, a more honored place. *But the point is that the seat you choose for yourself will manifest how you feel about yourself.* We hear a lot these days about the importance of *feeling good about*

*ourselves*. That is nothing but vanity and pride.

You see, each guest was faced with two possibilities:

- 1) To choose his own place, or
- 2) To let the host choose his place for him.

And regardless of who you were, you were always on safer ground to choose the lowest place for yourself. If the host invites you to come up higher, then instead of being embarrassed and shamed because you took the highest place to begin with, you will be honored by all at the feast because it is the host who has given you the place of honor.

Twice Solomon tells us in the book of Proverbs that “before honour is humility” (Prov. 15:33; 18:12). Cf. also Prov. 25:6-7, 27.

Now we know that the Lord has told us in His Word that His ways and His thoughts are both different and higher than ours. Cf. Isa. 55:8-9. And yet we know that in life we have more respect for a person who shows real humility than we do for a person who is always calling attention to himself, and boasting about what he has done or what he can do. But we see this all of the time, don't we? Probably most of our politicians disqualify themselves for the office they are seeking because of the way they exalt themselves.

You will notice that the parable does not have to do with what anybody *says*; but pride is shown by what the people in the parable *did*. I wonder if this has any connection with the fact that when the Lord asked the two questions earlier in the chapter, nobody answered Him. Now the book of Proverbs does tell us that people will think we are smart if we keep quiet. But our Lord wanted to point out that sometimes our actions speak more loudly and correctly than we do when we speak.

How did the Lord conclude? We have it in verse 12. (Read.)

There are no exceptions to this basic truth of Scripture. If you put yourself up, you are going to fall down. If you humble yourself, then the Lord will lift you up when He is ready to do it. And remember that there are no exceptions.

**Concl:** Again, the book of Proverbs contains a lot of wisdom on this subject which we need to know. And we will spare ourselves a lot of trouble and possible humiliation if we obey the Word. For example, Solomon said,

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit be-

fore a fall (Prov. 16:18).

On the other hand we read both in James and 1 Peter essentially the same thing about pride and humility. This is what James said:

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (James 4:10).

The Apostle Peter said this:

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Let me close by giving you two examples, one from the OT, and one from the NT:

- 1) Joseph in the book of Genesis--beginning with chapter 37.
- 2) The greatest of all examples, our Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. Phil. 2:1-11.

May God give us not only the grace to take the lowly place, but to do it with joy and gladness in our hearts. This is the way of peace and blessing for us, and this is the way that we can best bring the greatest glory to God.