



40th Annual Biblical Viewpoints Lectureship

Hard Sayings of Jesus

November 1-5, 2020

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at 8am on WEMT-TV (Fox 39) or look for us on YouTube.



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WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT?

Roby Ellis

Text: *John 6:60–69*

⁶⁰Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” ⁶¹When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? ⁶²What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? ⁶³It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. ⁶⁴But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. ⁶⁵And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” ⁶⁶From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. ⁶⁷Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” ⁶⁸But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Introduction

- I. Have you ever been in a situation where you had no idea what was going on?
 - A. There is little more frustrating than sitting in a crowded classroom where you are the only one who doesn't seem to be grasping the material.
 - B. I have found myself so confused and disoriented at times that I couldn't even think of a question to ask.
- II. Have you ever found Jesus a little difficult to understand?
 - A. The people sometimes don't understand Jesus.
 1. Here when He speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, they probably understand that He doesn't mean that literally, but they are completely at a loss to discern what He

does mean.

2. As we shall see further, this is far from the only time that the people fail to grasp the meaning of Jesus' words.

B. The disciples often don't understand Him much better.

1. So often the disciples' responses betray their ignorance of what He is trying to tell them (*John 2:19-22; 4:31-34; 11:9-16; 13:2-11; 16:16-18*).

2. Peter (who so often misses Jesus' point) doesn't understand here either, but he also knows there is something important in what Jesus is saying and why He is saying it this way.

C. I admit that I sympathize with the disciples, because often I too have trouble understanding Jesus, and then again, sometimes it isn't a difficulty of understanding, but a difficulty of living up to what He has commanded.

III. When we find the sayings of Jesus difficult either to understand or to follow, we have essentially two options: we can walk away, or we can choose to continue to walk with Him.

Discussion

I. You can choose to walk away.

A. God will always give you that option.

1. When we first listed our house for sale, we had a contract within 24 hours, but with lots and lots of conditions. When the buyer insisted that we spend \$1,500 to have someone pump an invisible gas out of our basement, we agreed it was best to let her walk away. And so she did.

2. It isn't that difficult to let someone walk away when you don't have a personal relationship with them, but what about when that person means a lot to you, or might even be related to you—perhaps even your own child?

3. I imagine there is nothing more difficult for the Lord than to allow one of His precious children to walk away from Him, but He allows us to, because if we don't have that option, we can never choose to serve Him or love Him.

- B. For this crowd Jesus was clearly not what they were looking for.
1. They were looking for a limitless food source (*John 6:30-34*).
 2. They were looking for a king (v 15), someone who would deliver them from Roman rule and restore Israel to its former glory.
 3. They appeared ready to defend His crown if only He would accept it.
 4. What is it that you are looking for in Jesus? If you are looking for something that He is not, Jesus would rather that you understand this right now instead of learning it later.
 - a. NOTE: One might say that Jesus lost a lot of crowds because He refused to compromise His mission in this world.
 5. But if you are looking for words of life, you have come to the right place!
- C. Some have walked away because they felt Jesus was asking too much of them.
1. Such was the case with the rich young ruler. He had too many worldly possessions to give up in order to follow Jesus (*Matt. 19:16–22*).
 2. There are those who would prefer to be saved after the model of the thief on the cross, because it seems that he had to give up so little.
 3. The truth is that Jesus demands everything of you, and Jesus will be pleased with your everything, however much or little that may be (*Luke 21:1–4*).
 4. When Jesus asks you to take up your cross and follow Him through trials and hardships and persecution, are you willing to follow Him there?
 5. What would be too much for Jesus to ask?
- D. If you do choose to walk away, where will you go?
1. Even in his ignorance Peter got it right here when he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (*John 6:68*).
 2. Maybe sometimes we just need to see the lack of alternatives

that this world has to offer. Those aren't viable options. But they *are* options.

3. You can turn to worldly pleasures or the pursuit of riches, but in the end, you will find that they could not deliver what Jesus does.

II. Even when we don't fully understand, we can await further instructions.

A. Jesus often offers more clarity for those interested in hearing.

1. When I was teaching, I had several office hours in which I made myself available for tutoring to my students. Very few ever took advantage of those services, but the ones who did performed much better in class.
2. Jesus would often explain His parables to His disciples, but only after much of the crowd had dispersed (*Matt. 13:36ff*).
3. You may not understand today why Jesus insists you must be born again of water and the Spirit. Even though Nicodemus was a respected teacher, he didn't understand this either (*John 3:1-12*). Will you listen anyway?

B. This lies at the heart of the difference between Peter and Judas.

1. These two men follow very similar paths until Judas let Satan into his heart and betrayed Jesus and ended his own life.
2. Although Peter denied Jesus, he went on to preach at Pentecost, and he was chosen to be the first to go to the Gentiles with the gospel?
3. The difference? Judas walked away too soon, whereas Peter stayed close to the only one with the words of eternal life.

C. Why should I wait?

1. Have you ever willingly waited for more than an hour at a restaurant? If so, it could only be because there was something you could get there that you simply could not get anywhere else.
2. Anyone can say that he has a way that leads to eternal life, and there are many who have made such claims.
3. If you believe that Jesus truly did die and rise again from the

tomb, doesn't that give His claims at least a little more credibility than the rest!

4. Peter knew that Jesus had the words of eternal life even before He had the evidence of the resurrection.
5. The fact is that you and I should continue to follow Jesus, if for no other reason, simply because there is nowhere else to turn.

Conclusion

- I. Do you ever find the words of Jesus difficult at times to understand or obey?
 - A. If you do, don't lose heart. You aren't the first of His disciples to think so. The important thing is that you don't give up.
 - B. Also don't forget that you can always ask Him for help (*Jas. 1:5*).
- II. If you know that you want to stay with Jesus, make it difficult to leave Him.
 - A. It is far easier to walk away from a relationship when you have very little of yourself invested in it. This is why so many marriages fail these days.
 - B. If you will invest the best of all you have in your relationship with Jesus, when difficult times come and you find Him difficult to follow, you will find it even more difficult to leave Him.
 - C. How much does Jesus demand? He would have you take His flesh as your food and His blood as your drink. Let Him be the very air that you breathe. That is how you become a disciple of Jesus.

LORD OF THE SABBATH

Eddy Craft

Text: *Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 11:23-28; Luke 6:1-5*

Introduction

- I. The Pharisees were not really concerned with what the Law of Moses taught, they just wanted to catch Jesus in a trap.
- II. The Pharisees accused Jesus and his disciples of violating the Sabbath Laws. The real question is, Did they?
- III. An examination of the text shows how Jesus dealt with their accusation.

Discussion

- I. **Gods Privilege: Verses 1-2** ¹ At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.
 - A. When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn (*Deut. 23:25*).
 1. A parallel account will show that is what they did (*Luke 6:1*).

“And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.”
 2. The text shows they did not use a sickle; this was not a harvest!
 - B. God gave people the privilege of plucking the corn; it was not a violation of the Sabbath Law.
 - C. The Sabbath Laws are revealed in *Exodus 20:10, 35:2* and *Numbers 15:32*; to conduct a harvest upon the Sabbath would surely be a violation.

D. To take the grain and put it to one's mouth to eat for food was not a sin.

II. **Gods Prescription: Verses 3-6** ³ But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; ⁴ How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? ⁶ But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

A. Jesus gave two examples:

1. David violated the Sabbath Law and they praised him as a righteous man (*1 Sam. 21:1; Lev. 24:9*).
2. The priests worked on the Sabbath and were considered guiltless.

B. Jesus showed that it had always been permissible to do minor labor on the Sabbath such as eating food and sacrificing animals.

C. The Pharisees applied stricter standards to the law than God had.

III. **Gods Preeminence: Verses 7-8** ⁷ But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

A. This is an elliptical sentence (i.e.. not sacrifice [only] but mercy [also]).

B. The Pharisees thought that as long as they sacrificed they were justified.

C. There is a similar example with King Saul (*1 Sam. 15:22*). “And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

D. Jesus had the preeminence.

1. He was greater than the temple.

2. He was the lawgiver of the things that the Pharisees were attempting to follow.
 - a. Moses spoke of this lawgiver (*Deut. 18:18-19*) “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”
 - b. Luke applies this to Jesus (*Acts 3:22-23*).
 3. Paul stressed the preeminence of Jesus in *Colossians 1:15-19*.
 4. Peter stressed the preeminence of Jesus (*Acts 4:12*). “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.
- E. Jesus is Lord of the sabbath day; this was an open profession of his Deity.
1. Jesus is the one who gave the Sabbath law in the first place; He could do with it as He willed.
 2. It is vital to remember that Jesus never sinned (*Heb. 4:15*). “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. If the disciples had been guilty of sin, Jesus would have said so.

Conclusion

- I. Brother Dan Winkler in an outline “Difficult Text From The Gospel Accounts” made the following points (practicalities):
 - A. Much care should be exercised when interpreting God’s law (*2 Tim. 2:15*).
 - B. Matters of personal opinion and personal judgment should be left to the “expedient” (*1 Cor. 10:23-24*) and never forced upon others as “essential” (*1 Cor. 4:6; cf. Rom. 14:1ff*).
 - C. Even the heroes of scripture erred, being human, as exemplified

by David (*1 Sam. 1:21*).

D. God's word is the absolute, objective, sufficient, standard by which man is to live (*2 Tim. 3:16-17*).

1. It is "knowable" (*v. 15*), that is, it can be known and "understood."

2. It is "honorable" (*v. 16*), that is, holy or sacred.

3. It is "capable" (*vs. 15,17*), that is, powerful.

II. May we never become like the Pharisees, binding laws that God has not bound.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Dennis Pierce

Text: *Matthew 5:43-48*

Introduction

I. “But I say to you,” (*Mt. 5:44*)

- A. Jesus directs the attention of those listening, during the sermon on the mount, to a teaching that had been heard regarding love and hate (*vs. 43*).
- B. Jesus saw the need to give some explanation of *Leviticus 19:18*, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”
 1. It appears the people were hearing things not consistent with truth.
- C. *Proverbs 25:21* helps to see that an enemy can be loved, “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;”
- D. We also read in *Exodus 23:4-5*, “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. ⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.”
- E. Jesus is making known His authority when he says several times “but I say unto you.” (*Mt. 5: 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44*)
 1. Loving your enemies is not an easy requirement but it is a command we have been given by the authority of Jesus (*Mt. 28:18*).

II. We see several places in scripture of love shown to an enemy.

- A. David’s love for Saul, *1 Samuel 24:11*, “Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not

- sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it.
- B. Stephen's prayer for his persecutors (*Acts 7:60*).
 - C. Jesus on the cross (*Luke 23:34*).
- III. Loving your enemy is no easy task but it accomplishes great results.
- A. "To our most bitter opponents we say: 'We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws because noncooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. Throw us in jail and we shall still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process and our victory will be a double victory.'" (Martin Luther King, Jr.)
- IV. Loving an enemy can be accomplished.
- A. *Mt. 11:30*, "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
 - B. *Mt. 17:20*, "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."
 - C. *Mk. 11:24*, "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

Discussion

I. An enemy is an adversary and will confront us in many ways.

- A. This should be expected, for Jesus told the apostles, "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved." *Mt. 10:22*
- B. Some will curse you.

1. We may think of cursing as limited to foul language but it can be much more, to include name calling, condescension, demeaning, etc.
2. Paul was called a babbler in *Acts 17:18*.
3. Jesus was called a glutton, a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors and sinners.
4. Christians today are often considered uneducated and in opposition to science.
 - a. In 2016, the New York Times had an article entitled, *Christians in U.S. Are Less Educated Than Religious Minorities*.
 - b. The article stated, “Atheists and agnostics, or people with no religion in particular, have higher education levels than the religiously affiliated do in the U.S.”
5. Higher levels of education do not even measure up to the foolishness of God *1 Cor. 3:18-20*, “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their own craftiness”; ²⁰ and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”
6. Jesus says to bless those who curse you and that means we do our best to speak well of them.
 - a. It has been said, “If you can’t say something kind about someone, say nothing at all.”

C. Others will hate you.

1. *1 John 2:9-11* teaches us the danger of hatred, “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. ¹⁰ He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
2. Hatred is a dislike or distrust of another and we should remember that those who hate us are doing more damage to themselves than to us.

3. Doing good to those who hate us changes everything.
- D. Enemies will use you (spitefully use you).
1. Most everyone has been used by another and the natural response is to be angry and desire to get even.
 2. We are to let God take care of any retaliation needed, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (*Romans 12:19*)
- E. Even physical persecution should not be surprising.
1. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution says in part, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”
 2. Jesus says our response to those who use us and persecute us is to pray for them.
 3. We should thank God every day for freedom to come together and worship Him.
 4. Furthermore we should pray, especially now, for our leaders to protect our freedoms.

II. God loved us while we were sinners.

- A. The question, “What is love,” has been asked and answered many times and in many ways.
1. We might say, “I love chocolate,” or “I love basketball.”
 2. We talk about loving our spouse or family members.
 3. The command to love our enemy is not obeyed by our good feelings or attraction for him.
 4. To love our enemy is a choice that we make and is accomplished by concern for the greatest good of another person.
 5. This love requires a commitment to obey God and demonstrates to the world that we are disciples of Christ (*John 13:35*).
- B. Paul writes in *Rom. 5:8*, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
1. God is concerned about what is best for us and this is how He

- loves us.
2. There is nothing so beautiful about us that motivates Him to give us His love.
 3. God is love (*1 John 4:8*).

III. Loving your enemies is the pathway to perfection.

- A. Jesus declares in *Mt. 5:48*, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”
- B. In *1 Cor. 13:10*, we read, “when that which is perfect has come...,” and the word perfect has reference to the completed revelation of God in the scriptures.
- C. This is the same meaning here in *Mt. 5:48*, referring to us being perfect or complete. (It does not mean we will be sinless.)
- D. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing (*James 1:4*).

Conclusion

- I. Loving our enemies may be one of the most difficult commandments from God.
- II. However, it is often the case that obedience to what is the most difficult makes us more like Christ.

LET THE CHILDREN BE FILLED FIRST

Steve Johnson

Text: *Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30*

Introduction

- I. Was Jesus unkind to a desperate woman concerned for her child?
- II. What were His intended lessons for this woman, for the apostles, and for us?

Discussion

I. Journey to an Unlikely Land (*Matthew 15:21; Mark 7:24*)

A. Jesus' Destination – Tyre and Sidon

1. Historically
2. Religiously
 - a. Paganism (Jezebel – *I Kings 16:31*)
 - b. Versus Chorazin and Bethsaida (*Mt. 11:21-22; Lk. 10:14*)

B. Jesus' Purpose

1. To prevent conflict (*John 6:15*)
2. To rest (*Mark 7:24*)
3. To teach His apostles (*Matthew 15:23-24*)
4. To bless a Gentile woman (*Matthew 15:28; Mark 7:29-30*)

C. Jesus' Fame

1. Followed by multitudes (*Mark 3:8; Luke 6:17*)
2. He could not be hidden (*Mark 7:24*)

II. Confronted by an Unlikely Believer

A. The Syrophenician Woman's Identity

1. Female
2. Greek (*Mark 7:26*)
3. Syrophenician (*Mark 7:26*)
4. Canaanite (*Matthew 15:22*)

- 5. Gentile (*Matthew 15:24*)
- B. The Syrophenician Woman's Intention
 - 1. She hurried to Jesus (*Mark 7:25*)
 - 2. She made a persistent request (*Mark 7:26*)
- C. The Syrophenician Woman's Insight
 - 1. How she addressed Jesus (*Matthew 15:22*)
 - 2. How she elevated Jesus (*Matthew 15:25*)

III. Blessings of an Unlikely Conversation (*Mk. 7:27-30, Mt. 15:24-28*)

- A. It began with silence (*Matthew 15:23*)
- B. The verbal exchange (*Matthew 15:25-28; Mark 7:27-29*)
 - 1. Feed the children first (*Mark 7:27*)
 - a. Jesus was testing her
 - b. The nature of "little dogs"
 - 2. Crumbs for the little dogs (*Mark 7:28*)
 - a. She acknowledged the greatness of Jesus
 - b. She asked humbly for a crumb of mercy
 - 3. She had passed the test
 - a. For this 'saying' or 'word' (*Mark 7:29*)
 - b. Great is your faith (*Matthew 15:28*)
- C. The Blessing of Faith
 - 1. Her daughter was healed from that hour (*Matthew 15:28*)
 - 2. The demon had gone out of her (*Mark 7:30*)

Conclusion

- I. Jesus controlled the direction and timing of His ministry.
- II. Jesus demonstrated that faith and mercy supersede ethnicity.
- III. The woman's actions revealed attributes of a disciple:
 - A. Perception
 - B. Persistence
 - C. Humility
 - D. Great Faith

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

Tracy Dugger

Text: *Matthew 19:9*

Introduction

- I. Choosing to marry involves one of the most serious decisions a person can make because in it will determine much of one's **future happiness and usefulness**.
 - A. Marriage problems are some of the most difficult experiences in life.
- II. Many marriage problems end in divorce, devastating the home.
 - A. Of the social ills that cause a society to fall, a high divorce rate is always near the top of the list. This was true of ancient Rome, as attested to by many historians.
 - B. Divorce is a definite plague of any society because it destroys the home, which is the unit and foundation of society.
- III. When divorce results in the breakup of the home, every member of that household is affected mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and often physically.
 - A. The effect it has on husbands and wives is serious enough. But especially is the damage to impressionable and trusting children, who in trying to process it, can develop many future problems.
 - B. The divorce statistics are stunning as any Google search would show. As a public school-teacher I see it first-hand.
 - C. Is it any wonder that God said "*that he hateth putting away*" (*Malachi 2:16*)?
- IV. It is not my purpose in discussing this subject to hurt or offend anyone. I do realize that the Divine Author of the Bible does deal with things that offend people. However, this is not God's intention. His aim is to bring light into a dark world (*John 1:5; 3:19-21*). His intent is to save people from sin (*Romans 5*) and to lead them into living right (*Romans 6*).

- A. Often God’s ordinances conflict with mankind’s ideas and practices. Divine principles of right and wrong, although at times difficult, are intended to benefit us, and they will if we follow them. We are challenged to live a life of trust and faith in God. He knows best.
1. We serve a God of love, kindness, and mercy, but He also has the qualities of holiness, righteousness, and justice. This balance of traits makes Him the perfect God and He desires us to accept His truth that we might be pleasing to Him and have true peace.
 2. That desire and expectation for us becomes very real when we realize that we are accountable to Him and will be judged by His Word (*John 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10*).
- B. My purpose is to deal with what the New Testament says about divorce and remarriage, specifically, *Matthew 19:9*.
- C. I do not approach this as if I have all the answers, but I serve a God Who does and Who has given us an all-sufficient Word, the Bible (*2 Timothy 3:16-17*).
1. I do believe that we can know the truth about this subject (*John 8:32; Ephesians 3:3-5*). Jesus expected His audience to understand this issue. This is why He stated about marriage, divorce, and remarriage, “***Have ye not read...***” (*Matthew 19:4*)? The Jews were to read that they might understand. We are to read that we might understand.

Discussion

I. **What is marriage?**¹

- A. Marriage, acceptable to God, is a contract (covenant, commitment), ideally growing out of love and perpetuated by love, between two eligible persons, to take each other as husband and wife, according to the laws of God and the laws of the land, until separated by death.

¹ Class notes from Thomas Eaves, Sr., while a student at Tennessee Bible College.

- B. A Creation of God (*Genesis 1-2; 1 Timothy 4:3*).
 - 1. An arrangement instituted by God from the beginning of time.
 - 2. Who therefore has the right to govern it? *Matthew 19:6* teaches that God, who created and designed it, has that right.
- C. An Arrangement Instituted by God that Involves One Husband and One Wife (*1 Corinthians 7:2*).
 - 1. God's plan for marriage – one man, for one woman, for one lifetime
 - 2. God's plan for marriage – till death do you part
- D. A Sacred Arrangement Where There Will Exist Right Basic Attitudes:
 - 1. Leave and Cleave (*Genesis 2:23-25; Matthew 19:4-6*)
 - 2. Agape Love (*Ephesians 5:22-31*)
 - 3. Husband Lovingly Takes On Headship and Leadership (*Ephesians 5:23-25*)
 - 4. Wife Respectfully Submits (*Ephesians 5:23-24*)
 - 5. Respect, Kindness, Selflessness, etc. (*Ephesians 5:22-31; Colossians 3:18-19*)
- E. A Creation of God Existing for Distinct Purposes:
 - 1. Personal Self-Completion (*Genesis 2:18*)
 - 2. Propagation of the Human Race (*Genesis 1:28; Psalm 127:35*)
 - 3. Avoiding Immorality (*1 Corinthians 7:2*)
 - 4. Provide Wonderful Companionship (*Genesis 2:22-25*)
 - 5. Help Spouse (*Ephesians 5:22-23; 1 Peter 3:7*)
 - 6. To Develop and Nurture an Atmosphere of Love in which Children can be Reared (*Ephesians 6:1-4*)
- F. Marriage is the ONLY Situation in which the Sexual Relationship is Approved (*Hebrews 13:4*)!

II. Fornication and Adultery - Defined

- A. Fornication – illicit sexual intercourse; every kind of unlawful sexual relations. It is a general term including adultery, pre marital relations and extra-marital relations, homosexuality,

incest, and bestiality.²

B. Adultery - Unlawful sexual relations where at least one party is married; the physical act (sexual intercourse).

1. Two *single* people having relations are not committing physical adultery, they are committing simple fornication.

Adultery exists where at least one party is married.

2. Adultery would fall under the general category of fornication.

3. All adultery is fornication but not all fornication is adultery.

C. *Matthew 19:9* defines the parameters of adultery in that the context involves a married person. This is the standard definition – sexual relationship with someone other than one’s spouse or as a single party; fornication with someone who is married.

1. However, the context of *Matthew 19:9* shows an exception to this definition. Jesus teaches that the one divorced for the cause of fornication (the only Scriptural approval for divorce and remarriage; the guilty party) is no longer married and no longer eligible to marry “another.” This is the guilty party in a Scriptural divorce. Anyone, except the former mate, that marries that guilty party also enters into a relationship that is adultery. And so, Jesus modifies the standard definition of adultery. To define adultery as the sin of fornication where at least one party is married is an incomplete definition. *Matthew 19:9b* adds a more complete understanding by modifying the definition of adultery. This ought not alarm us for Jesus redefines or modifies the Old Testament usage of “adultery.” In the Old Testament, the word “adultery” was never applied to any remarriage after a divorce. Not to mention that taking a second wife (polygamy) would be adultery today, but not under the Old Testament.³

D. Anyone found in a relationship of sexual intercourse where at least one of the persons is married is described as committing

² A simple word study of the original Greek term from both a Bible dictionary or lexicon will clearly reveal this description and definition.

³Kerry Duke, *The Remarriage of A Divorced Couple*, p.33-43.

adultery. In order to **repent** of this relationship, one must leave that situation.

1. Some oppose this idea of repentance. Consider this simple illustration. Suppose I rob a bank, steal someone's car, and steal (marry) my neighbor's wife. If I am to be forgiven by God, what must I do? If I am not a Christian, then I must first become one. As a Christian then, must I return what I have stolen? Am I not told to repent? Absolutely (2 *Corinthians 7:10; Acts 8:22*)! In my repentance, restitution is demanded as far as possible. I cannot keep the car, nor the money. May I keep my neighbor's wife? No! I must also give her back. Repentance for adultery means I am not permitted to keep a wife that is another man's possession.
 2. Another illustration. Suppose a preacher goes to a remote area to teach the Gospel. He finds a tribal people who practice polygamy. The chief of the tribe hears the Gospel and chooses to obey it. He is a man who has three wives. When he becomes a Christian, may he keep all three wives? Absolutely not (*1 Corinthians 7:2*). Although he still may have some responsibility toward all three wives and his children, repentance demands that he separate from his last two wives because he is involved in adultery with them. He cannot remain *married* to his last two wives.
 3. Still Another Illustration. Homosexual marriages are legal today in many places. Suppose two men are married and they obey the Gospel and become Christians. Does baptism sanctify or approve of a homosexual marriage? Can they remain in that homosexual relationship? No! Must they separate? Absolutely!
 4. Repentance then, demands that an adulterous relationship cease.
- E. Some have contended that after repentance, one can simply continue to **live** with that person in marital union (which was adultery before repentance). However, repentance does not cancel out an adulterous situation. The Bible teaches that a

person can **live in** adultery (*Colossians 3:5-7*).

1. Do repentance and forgiveness of sin dismiss the sin of fornication and thus adultery? In other words, can one remain in a marriage that was previously adultery by simply acknowledging the sin and appealing to repentance? No. This is not repentance. Repentance in an adulterous relationship demands leaving that sinful situation. To show that the sin of fornication (adultery, homosexuality, etc.) is something that people can continue in, or live in, without God's approval, Paul states in *Colossians 3*:

⁵ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ⁷ In the which ye also walked some time, when ye **lived in** them.

2. Fornication, including adultery, is something that can be "lived in." To show further proof of this, the Greek word properly translated in *Matthew 19:9*, "*commiteth adultery*" is a continuous action verb meaning that the person keeps on committing adultery each time they engage in sexual relations. Or, another way of stating it is that when two people who are not Scripturally married remain in a "marital relationship" that includes intimacy, they are living in fornication (adultery). And one cannot live in fornication (adultery) and be faithful to God.

F. There is some confusion today regarding the types of adultery in the Bible. There are three kinds of adultery:

1. **Physical** Adultery (*Matthew 5:28; 19:9*). This is the physical **act** (*John 8:4*) in which physical sexual involvement exists between two people. At least one of these people must be married in order to classify it as "adultery". Adding to this understanding is *Matthew 19:9*, which teaches that a put away fornicator married to even a single person also involves

an adulterous situation. If each person involved in a sexual relationship are eligible for marriage but are not married to each other, then this is simple “fornication,” or premarital sex.

a. Generally, physical adultery is a sexual act where fornication has occurred (where, again, at least one party is married).

2. **Spiritual Adultery** – This is where a child of God becomes unfaithful to the Lord and serves another god. That “god” may be an idol, false religion, or material possessions (general worldliness).

a. James refers to this in *James 4:4*. Here, “adultery” is equated with loyalty to the world. The context has to do with being unfaithful to God. Since we are married to Christ (*Romans 7:4; 2 Corinthians 11:2*), serving another would be spiritual adultery.

b. The Old Testament frequently spoke of Israel as the wife of Jehovah (*Psalms 73; Isaiah 57; Ezekiel 23; Hosea 3*).

i. In *Ezekiel 16:15*, Israel played the harlot (committed spiritual adultery) by serving false gods. See also *Ezekiel 23:43*.

ii. There is spiritual fornication depicted in the book of Hosea.

c. This is classified as a metaphor and is also seen in *Revelation 14:8; 17:2,4; 18:3; 19:2* in connection to pagan idolatry.

3. **Mental Adultery** (*Matthew 5:28*). It is the **thought** of committing fornication with a particular woman that is here condemned. It is not merely having natural sexual feelings for a member of the opposite sex. Or, even being tempted. Instead it is taking the matter further than temptation and contemplating on how to make that come true or a continual fantasizing about sex with that particular woman.

a. There is a distinction to be made between lusting after a woman (*Matthew 5:28* – this is what David did in 2

- Samuel 11:2*) and common temptation toward a woman.
- b. There is a distinction between mental and physical adultery even in this context – *Matthew 5:27-32*.
- G. Because one has committed the sin of *mental* adultery, or even *spiritual* adultery, does not make them guilty of the “adultery” in *Matthew 5:28 and 19:9*. *Mental* adultery is not the same as *physical* adultery (and not the “adultery” of *Matthew 5:28 and 19:9*).
1. Things do not become sin only because we *do* them. Sometimes things are sinful because we *think* them. Thoughts can be sinful. In fact, most sinful actions first begin in the mind. *Matthew 5:28* is an example of a sinful thought.
 2. Having hateful thoughts toward enemies (*Matt. 5:44*) or toward a brother in Christ (*1 John 3:14-15* – this is mental murder just as *Matthew 5:28* is mental adultery) is also wrong. The Sermon on the Mount contains many example of sinful thinking (*Matthew 5-7*).
 - a. We do not equate mental murder with physical murder. Both are sin but both do not necessarily share the same consequences on this earth. The same is true with adultery. Both mental and physical adultery are sin, but both do not share the same consequences on earth. One is perhaps a warning of what could lead to something worse – physical adultery. One is grounds for divorce, but the other is not.
 3. The one who uses *Matthew 5:28* (mental adultery) as grounds for divorce and remarriage per *Matthew 19:9* is misinterpreting *Matthew 19:9*. And yet, some use this line of reasoning for justification of divorcing their mate for the “cause of fornication.”
 - a. Question: Would the one who uses *Matthew 5:28* for understanding “adultery” in *Matthew 19:9* also use the concept of adultery in *James 4:4* (worldliness) as grounds for divorce? In other words, would they use it to justify

divorcing their spouse due to becoming an unfaithful child of God (worldliness)?

H. We must understand that God's instructions for divorce and remarriage are designed to protect the home.

III. Who is eligible to marry?

A. *Matthew 14:4* – “For John said unto him (Herod), It is not lawful for thee to have her (Herodias).”

1. Someone here was not **eligible** for marriage.
2. Only certain persons may enter a scriptural marriage.
3. To forbid marriage to those who are eligible is binding where God has not bound and a doctrine indicating a departing from the faith (*1 Timothy 4:1-3*).

B. There are **FOUR** Classes of People Eligible for Marriage:

1. **Those who have never married.** They have never entered into a scriptural marriage (*1 Corinthians 7:2; Matthew 19:4-5*).
2. **Those whose mate has died** (*Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39*).
3. **Those who have divorced their mate for the cause of fornication.**
 - a. This is the only scriptural divorce – fornication is the one and only ground upon which a genuine (scriptural) divorce (one approved by God) may be obtained. And in this case, only the innocent party has the right to remarry.
4. **The guilty party of a Scriptural divorce who again marries their former eligible mate.**

D. Further elaboration on the fourth case.⁴

1. *Matthew 19:9b* – “and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”
 - a. This statement counts as adultery, two classes of people:

⁴ For further study on this point, I recommend you read brother Kerry Duke's book, *The Remarriage of a Divorced Couple*. I have used some of brother Duke's material for this point. In addition, I was a student in brother Duke's classes at Tennessee Bible College and some of this material also comes from my class notes where he was the instructor. I am not always sure when some of the material I received as a student made it into my sermon material. I do not wish to take credit for that which I did not author.

- i. The **outside** party (and not the former mate) who marries one of the persons in an unscriptural divorce (a divorce not for fornication). This is proved by Luke’s account (*16:18* – “from her husband”).⁵
- ii. The outside party who marries the guilty party of a divorce for the cause of fornication. If Luke’s “whosoever” is the same as Matthew’s “whoso” then this statement is true as well. If not, why not?
- b. This statement (*Matthew 19:9b*) does not forbid the reconciling of two people who previously divorced for an unscriptural reason (they divorced not for the cause of fornication). The marriage bond may have been dissolved according to civil law but not according to divine law. These people are still married in God’s sight because He did not approve of the divorce (*Matthew 19:6*).
 - i. They can be reconciled in marriage once again. Again, *Luke 16:18* makes the matter clearer. Also, *1 Corinthians 7:10-11* authorizes the reconciliation of a divorced couple, even though the divorce was not for the Scriptural reason of fornication.
 - ii. If this is true, then the guilty party of a Scriptural divorce may also marry their original partner, if that original party has remained unmarried (still eligible for marriage due to being the innocent party of a Scriptural divorce). Why? Because in the above case, the “whoso” (*Matthew 19:9*) does not refer to the original party. And if “whoso” does not refer to the original party in the first case, then it could not refer to the original party in the second case. If not, why not?
- c. Helpful in seeing this is Guy N. Woods’ statement about the word “another” in *Matthew 19:9* (Q & A, vol. 2,

⁵ In Luke 16:18, the first “whosoever” is universal, the second “whosoever” excludes the previous mate. 1 Cor. 7:10-11 also shows that the reconciliation of two unscripturally divorced people is approved of by Paul. The same would be true with Matthew 19:9 – the first “whosoever” is not exactly the same as the second “whoso”, which is translated “he” by ASV.

p.254):

He who puts away his wife and marries ‘another,’ is not by these words forbidden to return to his former companion, because the word ‘another’ ...does not include the first wife. The English definition of ‘another’ is, ‘different or distinct from the first considered.’ (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary)... The prohibition in the words, ‘and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery,’ is there because any marriage, not broken because of fornication to ‘another’ (not the same one), is prohibited. Therefore, to extend this prohibition to embrace one not included in ‘another’ is unwarranted.

- i. Brother Woods shows that the word “another” is a third party. Additionally, a fourth party is under consideration in the last clause of *Matthew 19:9*. Luke’s account is more specific of this fourth party (*Luke 16:18*). See also *Romans 7:3*.
 - d. The reconciling or remarrying of the former mates is not a part of the discussion of *Matthew 19:9*, much less forbidding of their remarriage or reconciling to each other.
2. If *Matthew 19:9b* forbids the remarriage of the guilty party to their former innocent mate (in a Scriptural divorce), then it also forbids the remarriage/reconciliation of a couple who previously divorced for unscriptural reasons. But Paul approves of this second case in *1 Cor. 7:10-11*. Therefore, *Matthew 19:9b* does not have in its meaning of “whoso” the former mate.

IV. Analysis of Matthew 19:1-11

A. Question of the Pharisees – vs. 1-3

1. They “came to him” not in honesty nor in seeking information on the subject.
 - a. “They came to him, tempting him” – trying to entangle;

- they came to test Him. They wanted to create a conflict for Him; to destroy His influence.
2. The Question – Can a man divorce his wife for any reason?
 - a. Position of our society and the school of Rabbi Hillel (popular belief of the day).
 3. The Old Covenant did allow divorce under some circumstances (*v.7; Deut. 24:1*).⁶
 4. The Pharisees anticipated that whatever He answered that He would be in conflict with some present authority.
 - a. If He responded in agreement, He would then be in contradiction to His own teaching in the Sermon on Mount (specifically *Matthew 5:28-32*). He would also be in opposition to another prominent school of Rabbinic thought (Shammai – “some indecent thing”).
 - b. However, if He forbade divorce for any reason, again He would contradict Himself, as well as Rabbi Hillel.
- B. The Lord’s Response (*vs.4-6*) – Jesus took them to the Word of God!
1. *vs.4-5* – referred back to the original creation of marriage
 - a. Appealed to their own knowledge of the Scriptures “Have ye not read?” By-passed any view of man (Hillel or Shammai).
 - i. He asks if they are familiar with their own Scriptures. He completely avoided their trap by appealing to their own Scriptures - to the Beginning where God gave sacred laws by which marriage was to be governed. Marriage is of divine origin therefore subject to divine laws.
 - b. “For this cause” (*v.5*) – because He made them male and female (members of the opposite sex) and because of the love they would have for one another (proven by Paul’s use of “For this cause” in *Eph. 5:31*).
 - i. For this cause they shall:

⁶ For a discussion of what the Law of Moses allowed in divorce, see Kerry Duke’s book, *The Remarriage of a Divorced Couple*, ch.2.

- A) Marry
- B) Leave all others
- C) Become one in love, aim, and purpose
- D) Cleave to each other

2. v.6 – The Laws of God Govern Marriage!

- a. When two eligible persons join themselves together in sacred matrimony, according to laws of land and laws of God, they are joined together by God.
- b. The Simple Fact – When God Himself has done the joining, no human is permitted to change or “unjoin”! They may attempt to do so, but this does not undo what God has pronounced. What therefore God has joined together, let not man – *any man, any person* – even think that he can disrupt, change, or cancel out this joining! Since this is God’s joining, only God Himself can “put asunder” that which He has joined.

C. The Pharisees Second Question – v.7: They had concluded that Moses had commanded divorce.

D. The Lord’s Response (v.8-9)

- 1. v.8 – Moses did not command divorce; he suffered (allowed, permitted) it for some reasons, but this was not God’s original plan – “from the beginning it was not so”
- 2. The Lord has made clear for those under the New Covenant what is God’s law on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. He has set forth His teaching that would have application in His kingdom.
- 3. v.9 teaches:
 - a. Whosoever divorces their mate and marries another commits adultery.
 - i. One Exception – Fornication
 - ii. Is this the only reason?
 - A) What does “except” mean? See the following passages with the word “except” (*John 3:5; Matthew 5:20; 18:3; 26:42*)
 - b. Whoever marries a divorced (having been put away)

person commits adultery. The guilty party in a Scriptural divorce is prohibited to marry another.

c. Fornication is the sole reason for divorce and remarriage.

E. Consequences of Adultery

1. Defiles a person (*Matt. 15:19-20*).
2. Keeps one from inheriting the kingdom (*1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21*).

F. Response of Disciples (v.10-11)

1. v.10 – Perhaps being reluctant to give up the common belief of the day found in verse 3, the disciples concluded that if fornication was the one and only grounds for divorce and remarriage, then it is not expedient to marry.
 - a. To the disciples this was a hard saying.
2. v.11
 - a. Many have become disturbed when they learn what the Lord says on various doctrinal truths (the plan of salvation, existence of hell, requirements for Christian living, and as in this text, divorce and remarriage).
 - b. NT teaching regarding divorce and remarriage is strict, especially in view of modern society's loose and compromising views of morality.
 - c. We do sympathize with those, who through ignorance, involve themselves in heart-breaking but immoral relationships.
 - i. However, let us understand a vital truth: While we should be compassionate towards those who are living in sin by attempting to help them, we cannot lower the standards of the Gospel just because a society has so done.
 - ii. Instead, let us encourage and challenge people to rise to the authority of God's inspired truth.
 - iii. Christianity requires great sacrifices.

V. The Effects of Fornication & Adultery

- A. Eternal Effects - Of course, all unforgiven sin will be punished on Judgment Day – future.

- B. Emotional Effects - emotional turmoil, guilt, jealousy, fear, anxiety, insecurity, self-condemnation, anger and depression are among the reactions that have been known to follow fornication.
 - 1. Adultery will greatly affect the physical relationship between a husband and wife, even after forgiveness and acceptance of the guilty once again.
- C. Interpersonal Effects - relationships with others. Dating, family, marriage and other relationships are affected by fornication.
 - 1. Fornication has wrecked many marriages, created dysfunctional homes, alienated family members, destroyed friendships, and affected jobs.
- D. Spiritual Effects - attempting to live the Christian life while at the same time engaging in fornication is a contradiction.
 - 1. If fornication continues, one's spiritual vitality and influence are certain to diminish. Sin must be confessed and forsaken if one is to grow spiritually and avoid spiritual deadness.
- E. Physical Effects – unwanted pregnancy, STDs.
 - 1. Even emotional turmoil can produce many physical effects.

Conclusion

- A. God is right when He warns us against such things.

FRIENDS OF UNRIGHTEOUS MAMMON

Drew Leonard

Text: *Luke 16:1-18*

Introduction

- I. The text that is presented in Luke 16:1-8 is rather difficult.
- II. It is from this “parable” that Jesus “springboards” into another discussion of what the “kingdom” (“reign”) is to look like.
- III. We will look at . . .
 - A. The Purpose of Parables.
 - B. The Plot of the Particular Passage.
 - C. The Point to the People.
 - D. The Perpetual Principles.

Discussion

I. The Purpose of Parables

- A. The reason that Jesus spoke in “parables” (literally, “to throw beside”) was to convey spiritual truths through figures, by laying them beside parallel scenarios (*cf. Mat. 13:10-17*).
- B. The “parables” *collectively* shape a picture of the kingdom.
 1. Consider the thrusts/themes of these parables; each presents a different element of the kingdom . . .
 - a. The Pearl of Great Price = Kingdom's Value (*Mat. 13:45, 45*).
 - b. The Wise and Foolish Virgins = Preparation for Judgment (*Mat. 25:1-13*).
 - c. The Unjust Steward = Stewardship and Wisdom (*Luke 16:1-8*).
 2. C.H. Dodd was right to recognize the parables as “the parables of the kingdom.” (Dodd, C.H., *The Parables of the Kingdom*, Charles Scribner's Sons. New York. 1936. Print.)

- a. The Old Testament people anticipated a coming, Jewish, eschatological (final, ending) kingdom.
 - i. Consider Walter Kent's "White Cliffs of Dover" as a model.
 - a) What is meant by "shepherds"?
 - b) What is meant by "Jimmy"?
 - c) What is meant by "tomorrow"?
 - d) The songwriter is not predicting; he is imagining, seeing an ideal image after World War II.
 - ii. Neither are the O.T. prophets "predicting" in every case – though they do in some – but they are imagining an "ideal image" after/beyond the crisis (*see esp. Isa. 2:1-4; 65:1-ff.; Zech. 14*).
- C. If the "parables" present components of this "ideal, Jewish, eschatological (final) kingdom," how does the present parable of the "unjust steward" fit into this framework?

II. The Plot of the Passage

- A. How should we approach our reading of *Luke 16:1-8*?
 - 1. Is it allegorical (where the major details are symbolic for real world events/people)?
 - 2. Is it ideal or imagined (where the scenario is not symbolic for specific events/people but suggestive of a *kind* of event/person)?
- B. It seems clear that the reading is an imagined scenario.
 - 1. The "rich man/owner" (*vs. 1,2,8*) does not seem to be God, since he appears to applaud the unethical behavior in the scenario.
 - 2. The "unjust steward" does not appear to "symbolize" any in particular (though multiple "applications" or "points" will be made to both Pharisees and Christians).
 - 3. The "debtors" do not seem to appear to "symbolize" any particular people.

- C. The plot of the passage is to set up a scenario that can provide various lessons.

III. The Point to the People

- A. The “big point” is to compare the coming and ideal “kingdom” of God to situation; notice the comparison . . .

Steward Scenario

Acted Wisely (*vs. 8*)

Planned for Crisis (*vs. 9*)

Faithful with Riches (*vs. 10-12*)

Hearts (*vs. 14,15*)

Kingdom People

Be Wise for the Kingdom

Plan for the Kingdom

Value the Kingdom

Hearts (*cf. Luke 17:20,21*)

- B. There are some difficult strands; what do they mean?

1. The “children of this world are wiser than the children of light” (*vs. 8*) means that world people sometimes exercise more intuition, effort, energy for physical things than saints do for the kingdom.
2. The encouragement to “make friends of unrighteous wealth” (*vs. 9*) simply means to use physical wealth, in this age, for the kingdom's benefit (*see esp. vs. 11* for the contrast of “unrighteous wealth” and “true riches.”
 - a. “Unrighteous” is a strange modifier, suggesting “physical” (*cf. Rom. 8:3; 1 Tim. 3:8*).
 - b. Compare Luke 16:4 with Luke 16:9 – both speak of “receiving into houses/habitations.”
 - c. Jesus is not encouraging “gain” by wickedness.

- C. How do *verses 13-18* relate to the previous parable? Are they disjointed? Are they isolated? Do they connect?

1. It seems clear that they *do* connect to the previous texts.
2. If the “parables” are “parables of the kingdom,” then it may be that Jesus is giving other elements about the ideal, collective image of what this “eschatological (final) reign of God” should look like.
3. The remaining texts (*vs. 13-18*) insist the “kingdom” . . .
 - a. Consists of God's “true” riches (*vs. 13*).
 - b. Consists of “true”/“full” hearts (*vs. 15*).

- c. Consists of the fulfillment of the O.T. “ideal” kingdom (*vs. 16,17*); those O.T. promises are not discarded or modified . . . the “fulfillment” transcends the promise/expectation as a Rolls Royce would suit a child even better than a horse and buggy (*cf. Rom. 15:8; Heb. 8:6*); (McGuiggan, Jim, *Zechariah: the Day of Small Things*, pg. 101, Sunset Institute Press. Lubbock, TX. 2011. Print.)
 - d. Consists of a people that is not covetous (*vs. 14,18*); their riches and their marriages should have been “free” of covetousness and full of conformity to the ideal image of the “reign/kingdom” of God.
- D. The text told the people what the *coming* “kingdom” should look like.

IV. The Perpetual Principles

- A. Now that we have examined the purpose of parables, the plot of the present passage and the point to the people of that day (in the first century), we are prepared to transpose the text into a modern key . . . What does it mean for us today?
- B. The picture in *Luke 16* said what the *coming* “kingdom” should look like; *now*, it says what the “kingdom” *that came* should look like; it should be . . .
 - 1. Based in wisdom/shrewdness (*Mat. 10:16*).
 - 2. Based in planning (*1 Cor. 4:1-ff.*).
 - 3. Based in our energy, time, money, passion (*Mat. 6:33; Luke 17:20,21*).
 - 4. Based in our hearts (*Luke 16:14,15; 17:20,21*).
- C. The “kingdom” should dominate our lives in all areas (money [*vs. 10-12*], hearts [*vs. 13-15*], marriages [*vs. 18*]); our lives must conform to the image of the kingdom, as pictured in the parables.

Conclusion

- I. The parable of the “unjust steward” gives us an imagined illustration that Jesus can use to make various points.
- II. The lesson that we need to learn today is that the kingdom that Jesus brought demands our best in relation to . . .
 - A. Our wisdom.
 - B. Our plans.
 - C. Our money.
 - D. Our energy.
 - E. Our time.
 - F. Our passion.
 - G. Our hearts.
 - H. Our marriages.

Appendix #1 – Author's Paraphrase of Luke 16:1-18

Jesus said to His disciples, “I'm imagining of a sort of rich man, who had a manager of his business . . . And, it was told to the rich man that the manager had been wasting and cheating. (The manager was being irresponsible with the things that were placed into his care.) [2] So, the rich man came into the business on a random day and called the manager into the conference room, asking, 'Is it true? What I'm hearing, is it true? Show me the books that you've been keeping. You will no longer be the manager. Your last day is in two weeks.' [3] While on his way home that day, the manager thought to himself, 'What am I going to do? I've just lost my job, and I'm no good at digging – I've been an office man for years now – and I wouldn't dare beg for money – I used to be a manager of a big business!' [4] After more thought and the passing of time, the manager thought, 'I know what to do! I've got a brilliant plan! When my last day as manager comes, I'll have no worries. After my firing, I'll be well taken care of!' [5] So, the manager went in to work on one of those last days of his job and looked over the accounts of the people that still needed to make payments to the rich man's business, and he asked the first debtor, 'How much left do you have on your payments?' [6] And the first debtor replied, 'I still owe the cost of 900 gallons [100 measures] of olive oil.' to which the manager insisted,

'Write a check for half the cost and we'll call it even!' [7] Then the manager called a second debtor into the office and asked, 'How much left do you have on your payments?' to which the second debtor responded, 'Whatever 1,000 bushels [100 measures] of wheat costs these days.' to which the manager bargained, 'If you can pay 80 percent of the total, I'll write the rest off.' [8] When the rich man came into the business later and found out about the dealings of his sly and dishonest manager, he actually praised him because of his quick thinking. (Sometimes, the secular, worldly folk are quicker and better thinkers and planners than those who try to follow God.)”

[9] Jesus finished the story and then said, “Let me tell you the point of this parable . . . If you want to be a true follower of God, you need to make the best of your physical wealth [unrighteous mammon] – you need to use that physical wealth to make friends. One day the money and materials will disappear – a physical crisis of some sort will eventually come upon you – but if you've made friends, you will be well taken care of like the manager in the scenario, but instead of being 'well off' physically, you'll be 'well off' spiritually. [10] You know that it makes sense that one who is responsible in little things is also responsible on a big scale, and people who are irresponsible in little things also can't be trusted with things on bigger scales. [11] So here is the point . . . If God has given you so much in this world and you can't manage that well, why would He trust you to be responsible with the real, the true riches? [12] If you can't take care of something that belongs to someone else, do you think that you will be responsible for things of your own?”

[13] You know that a servant can't work for two different masters with different goals and different ideas at the same time; the servant would be forced to serve the one and disregard the other or serve the other and disregard the one. Similarly, you can't serve both God and wealth!

[14] And alongside the disciples, the Pharisees, who were greedy, covetous, lovers of money, heard what Jesus was teaching, so they ridiculed and sneered at Him. [15] And Jesus responded, “You are the

sort that believe in self-justification and put on a good act in public, acting to be holy, but God knows how you really are; He knows what is really in your hearts. The things that worldly men, like yourselves, value are an abomination – they are detestable! abhorrent! – in God's eyes!

[16] The Old Testament law of Moses and the prophets were taught and anticipated until John the baptizer came. Ever since he showed up, we have been teaching about God's real, ideal reign – His kingdom – and what that should look like (as opposed to the kind of institution that the money-hungry Pharisees are supporting). This 'reign' or 'kingdom' of God doesn't just 'go along' with the establishment, the politicians, the money-holders . . . The ones that are entering into this 'reign' of God do so with eagerness for real morality, fairness, justice and equality . . . and sometimes that means violence comes against them from those (like the Pharisees) who have a monopoly on the present system. [17] Let me say this: I'm no moral anarchist. I'm not against the law of Moses. I'm not against the Old Testament, its principles, its practices – that's what the Pharisees would have you think of me! – No, as consistent and as constant as the cosmos is, that is exactly how stable I view God's establishment (not this Pharisaical monopoly) in the Old Testament law. [18] And one more thing: if an individual simply discards his wife and decides that he's going to get a different woman, that's wrong too! That's adultery! Plus, if some other man were to come along and marry that woman (who still belongs to her first husband – he hasn't died! there hasn't been fornication! they've only gotten a legal divorce or separation; that marriage is still 'in tact' in God's eyes) – if someone comes along and marries that woman, that's also adultery! That original couple belongs only to each other (unless fornication or death separates the marriage . . . but that's for another time).[Author's Paraphrase of Luke 16:1-18]

Appendix #2 – “White Cliffs of Dover” by Walter Kent (1941)

*There'll be bluebirds over
The white cliffs of Dover
Tomorrow, just you wait and see
I'll never forget the people I met
Braving those angry skies
I remember well as the shadows fell
The light of hope in their eyes
And though I'm far away
I still can hear them say
"Thumbs up!"
For when the dawn comes up
There'll be bluebirds over
The white cliffs of Dover
Tomorrow, just you wait and see
There'll be love and laughter
And peace ever after
Tomorrow, when the world is free
The shepherd will tend his sheep
The valley will bloom again
And Jimmy will go to sleep
In his own little room again
I may not be near, but I have no fear
History will prove it too
When the tale is told
It will be as of old
For truth will always win through
But be I far or near
That slogan still I'll hear
"Thumbs up!"
For when the dawn comes up
There'll be bluebirds over
The white cliffs of Dover
Tomorrow, just you wait and see*

*When night shadows fall, I'll always recall
Out there across the sea
Twilight falling down on some little town
It's fresh in my memory
I hear mother pray
And to her baby say
"Don't cry!"
This is her lullaby
There'll be bluebirds over
The white cliffs of Dover
Tomorrow, just you wait and see*

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

Dan C. Bailey

Text: *Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34*

Introduction

I. Poem: *When I Survey The Wondrous Cross* by Isaac Watts:

“When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride
Forbid it Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my Lord;
All the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to His blood.
See, from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e’r such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?
Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

A. *Luke 24:46-47* – “⁴⁶ And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ⁴⁷ And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

II. The words of our lesson were spoken from the cross of Calvary. The words are in the form of a question. They are found three times in the Bible.

A. *Psalm 22:1* – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”

- B. *Matthew 27:46* --“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
- C. *Mark 15:34* – “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
- III. Bible students recognize this question as the fourth saying of the Son of God while He was nailed to the old rugged cross.
- IV. If you are looking for someone to explain the depth of this passage, you’ll be looking for a long time. We cannot possibly understand all that took place between the Father and the Son when Jesus asked His Father, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
- V. Who can fully explain the agony of Gethsemane? Jesus foretold His death on the cross many times in various ways to His apostles. Yet, we have His tender submissive prayer.
- A. *Mark 14:36* – “And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” The Lord prayed this prayer three times.
- B. We read in Luke’s account: “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (*Luke 22:44*).
- C. Jesus was both human and divine. He knew the Father better than we could ever know the Father, but He was willing to obey the Father’s will and to die the death of the cross as the penalty for our sins.
- D. We sing in the chorus of *In Gethsemane Alone* by S. E. Reed:
“Oh what love, matchless love,
Oh what love for me was shown.
His forever I will be,
For the love He gave to me,
When he suffered all alone.”

Discussion

I. Survey of the Seven Sayings From The Cross

A. The first saying is recorded in *Luke 23:34*.

1. “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”
2. What other man in Greek history, or philosophy, or in the history of mankind ever prayed for the lost persons who crucified him?
3. Truly, “Never man spake like this man” (*John 7:46*).

B. The second saying on the cross is found nine verses later in *Luke 23:43*.

1. “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”
2. One of the thieves rebuked the other for railing on Christ.
Luke 23:39-43 -- “³⁹ And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. ⁴⁰ But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. ⁴² And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. ⁴³ And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

C. The third saying on the cross is found in *John 19:26-27*.

1. “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”
2. The Son of God was so full of love that He prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies, promised the penitent thief that he would be with Him that day in paradise, and then tenderly provided for His dear mother before His death. Ordinary man? I think not!

D. The fourth saying on the cross is found in *Matthew 27:46* and in

Mark 15:34.

1. *Matthew 27:46* – “And **about the ninth hour** Jesus cried **with a loud voice**, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
 2. *Mark 15:34* – “And **at the ninth hour** Jesus cried **with a loud voice**, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”
 3. It is more than interesting that Matthew and Mark both mention only one of the seven sayings of Christ, seemingly to emphasize the importance of this agonizing cry to His heavenly Father.
- E. The fifth saying of Christ on the cross is found in the very next verse in *John 19:28*.
1. “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”
 2. The scripture being fulfilled was *Psalms 69:21* – “They gave me also gall for my meat; **and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.**”
- F. The sixth saying on the cross is found two verses later in *John 19:30*.
1. “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”
 2. Jesus said during His personal ministry: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (*John 4:34*).
 3. The payment for reconciliation and salvation was made. He bore our iniquities and was ready to lay down His life to redeem us.
- G. The seventh and final saying on the cross is found in *Luke 23:46*.
1. “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”
 2. When Jesus uttered this final saying, He cried out with a loud voice. Where did the Son of God get His strength?

3. The sun had been darkened for three hours, the earth quaked, tombs were open, and the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. No wonder the centurion glorified God saying, “Certainly this was a righteous man.” (*Luke 23:44-47*).
4. *Matthew 27:54* – “Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.”
5. *Mark 15:39* – “And when the centurion, which stood over against him, **saw that he so cried out**, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.”

II. Let us carefully examine the prophecy of the crucifixion of Christ, found in *Psalms 22*.

- A. *Psalms 22:1* – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken? **why art thou so far from helping me**, and from the words of my roaring?”
 1. The Greek word for *forsaken* in *Matthew 27* and *Mark 15* means, “To abandon, desert, to leave in straits, leave helpless” (Thayer, p. 166).
 2. For a very brief moment in time, Jesus felt that the Father was far from helping him.
- B. *Psalms 22:6-21* – “⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. [See *Isaiah 53:3*]. ⁷ All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they **shake the head**, saying, [See *Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29*] ⁸ He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. [See *Matt. 27:43*] ⁹ But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. ¹⁰ I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art **my God** from my mother's belly. ¹¹ **Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.** ¹² Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. ¹³ They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are

out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. [See Mark 15:24; John 20:27; John 12:32-33] ¹⁷ I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. ¹⁸ They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. [See Matt. 27:35] ¹⁹ **But be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me.** ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. ²¹ Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.”

III. Let us finally ponder another prophecy of Christ and His great suffering.

A. Isaiah 53:1-12

“¹ Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? [See John 12:37-38; Rom. 10:16] ² For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. [See Isa. 11:1; Rev. 22:16] ³ He is despised and **rejected of men**; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. [See Acts 4:11-12; Psalm 118:22-23] ⁴ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [See Matt. 8:16-17] ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and **with his stripes we are healed.** [See I Peter 2:24] ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. [See I Peter 2:25] ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,

and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. [See Acts 8:32] ⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. [See Acts 8:33] ⁹ And he made his grave with the wicked, and with **the rich in his death;**[See Matt. 27:57-60] because he had done no violence, **neither was any deceit in his mouth.** [See I Peter 2:22] ¹⁰ **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief:** when thou shalt make **his soul an offering for sin,** he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant **justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.** [See Rom. 3:24-26; I Peter 2:24] ¹² Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and **he was numbered with the transgressors;** [See Mark 15:27-28] and **he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**” [See Mark 15:28]

Conclusion

- I. “See, from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e’r such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?
Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”
- II. If you believe in the Son of God, come to Him now in loving obedience.
 - A. Repent now. Confess His sweet name now.
 - B. Acts 22:16 – “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be

baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

C. Oh, be washed in the blood of the Lamb!

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER:

“Nothing in the history of the world, or even in the infinity of heaven, can compare to the events of Calvary, and this cry that broke through the surrounding darkness was the most startling of all words ever spoken. “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).”

Pharr, David R., *Voices of Calvary*, 2005, Publishing Designs, Inc., Page 95

“None can be so presumptuous as to think he can grasp the fullness of this startling and mysterious saying, this grief-filled question, this most profound and solemn of all the voices of Calvary. Here we must take off our shoes, knowing that we are standing on holy ground. We are not left without basic understanding, but it is fair to say that no other aspect of our Lord’s passion more powerfully validates the enormity of the awful price he paid for our redemption.”

Pharr, David R., *Voices of Calvary*, 2005, Publishing Designs, Inc., Page 98

“Yet their misunderstanding and misapprehension of this sad cry seems only a foreshadowing of the difficulties students and theologians have had with what the words actually imply. It is easy enough to determine from the text that he was not calling for Elijah. The words themselves are simple and precise. It is easy enough to apply the to some degree to some of the circumstances of David, from whom the lament is taken. (Actually, until Jesus, neither David nor anyone else experienced the entirety of the Psalm 22.) **But why did Jesus say it? Yes, it was a cry of agony, but does it mean the God had indeed forsaken him? Though men heard it, it was spoken to God, not to men, and we can never know the fullness of what was understood between the Lord and his God. Yet his words are given and we must consider them as best we can.**”

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“On the other hand, it must also be true that Jesus was never wrong in what he said. We can sympathize with the despondency of David, who in his distress thought he had been forsaken. He was wrong, of course, but spoke from the limited perception of one whose depression caused him to doubt God’s assurances. David’s cry was out of confusion. **But Jesus was never confused. His cry was not mere misdirected emotion.** Under great burdens men may say things that in better times they do not believe. Not so with Jesus. His was not the complaint of a disoriented or doubtful mind.”

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“It is not possible for God to be other than the God that he is. He is perfect in holiness and absolute in justice. He is also a God of love and mercy. Calvary is where perfect justice and gracious mercy are merged together to give us redemption. Some have naively imagined that God in his power might have chosen some other plan for saving men. But God being who he is, and sin being what it is, there could be no other way. Only in the suffering of the sinless Savior could the penalty for sin be paid.”

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““For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him’ (2 Corinthians 5:21). On the cross Christ was forsaken by God so that we could be accepted by God. He sensed the full weight of every man’s sins crushing upon his soul and felt how dreadful it is to bear sin’s penalty. He “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). The word is *vicarious* — substitutionary suffering. If “one died for all, then were all dead” (2 Corinthians 5:14).”

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“Jesus experienced the death of his body, but at the same time in some unfathomable way he experienced the awful penalty due for the sins of the whole creation.”

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“Probably no other aspect of the Lord’s passion can more wonderfully impress the depths of his saving love. What was he willing to do to save us? How far was he prepared to go? Yes, he went to the cross with all its shame and suffering. And while there, he let himself feel what it is to be forsaken by God!”

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