

762

Bible Lessons



**"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are CHANGED" II Cor. 3:18**

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 16, No. 4
Oct., Nov., Dec.,
1984**

**Faith Pub. House
Guthrie, Okla.
73044**

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

(USPS054-680)

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Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church
Edited by Leslie C. Busbee and Wayne Murphey

Subscription Price-50¢ a copy for quarter of year, or
\$2.00 per year, issued quarterly.

Second class postage paid at Guthrie, Oklahoma

Published Quarterly By

FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE
920 W. Mansur Ave.
Guthrie, Oklahoma 73044

Theme for Fourth Quarter, 1984

We will continue in this quarter with our series of lessons on studies from the four Gospels and the life of Christ. Most of these lessons will come from Luke's Gospel and will cover incidents and teachings during Christ's long extended journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. For some reason Luke records more concerning this fateful journey than the other writers. Although Luke does record some of the same happenings as the other three writers did, there are several of the lessons that only Luke gives us. It is also to be noted that Luke tells us of times when Christ taught lessons that were repeated in other places and on other occasions. Lessons such as "Counting the Cost," "The Great Supper," "The Prodigal Son and His Brother," "The Unjust Steward," "The Rich Man and Lazarus," and "The Widow and the Unjust Judge" are only found in Luke's Gospel. Aside from the traditional lesson on Christ's birth in Lesson 12 on Dec. 23, this series of lessons deals mainly with His journeying toward Jerusalem. I believe that if we will observe these lessons closely we will be able to grasp the serious and solemn emotions that filled the heart of our dear Saviour as He slowly made His way to Jerusalem where He was to taste death for every man. —Leslie C. Busbee

October 7, 1984

CHRIST ISSUES SERIOUS WARNINGS

Luke 12:1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3 Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops.

4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Memory Verse: For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Luke 12:2.

Central Thought: We should trust in and fear God before whom nothing is hid and who will permit nothing to remain hidden. This trust and fear of God will assure us of His favor, care, protection, guidance, and everlasting security.

Word Definitions: *Hypocrisy:* The moving and operation of one under a false pretence, pretending or feigning. *Blaspheme:* To speak vile things about someone or something; to speak irreverently against God. *Confess:* To assent or acknowledge.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There is a similar discourse to our lesson recorded in Matt. 10:26-33. It is possible that it was the same incident in both places. According to the setting of Luke's account these words were spoken on one of Christ's stopping places on His road to Jerusalem. People were flocking in great numbers to see and to hear Him. In the Greek text we find a different expression in the first verse: "He began to say to his disciples: 'First take heed to yourselves of the leaven of the Pharisees.'" The word 'first' was spoken by Jesus. This is indicating the importance He was placing on His disciples being on their guard against the hypocrisy of the leaders of the Jews. We know that it is still a warning for us today. We must beware of the deceitful-

ness of others and we must take heed and not allow this kind of spirit to be in us. It is one of the most treacherous and easy to be received of all dispositions that lead to error. Misleading others to get them to think or suppose something other than the real truth is hypocrisy or deceit. God has ways of bringing things to light. It matters not how promoted the wrong or suppressed the right. There is a God who sees all and will render a due reward. There is a touch of tenderness in the sobering statement of fearing God. We who are striving to please God are not under a spirit of slavish fear. It is a fear of love, recognizing the love and tenderness of God. A farthing was the fourth part of the Roman penny. It was the smallest division of money. Matthew said it took two sparrows to make a farthing, and Luke said five sparrows to make two farthings. Very cheap indeed was the sparrow's worth! Matthew stated that "one [sparrow] shall not fall on the ground without your Father." How much more is God concerned about us! He takes note of the numbers of the hairs on our heads. What a kind heavenly Father we have! —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Christ tell us to beware of?
2. What is to happen to everything that is covered or hidden?
3. Why are we not to fear them that kill the body?
4. What is the feeling and attitude of the Almighty God for a sparrow?
5. Of what value are His children to Him?
6. What does the numbering of the hairs on our heads indicate?
7. How are we to confess Christ before men?
8. Why should we not meditate beforehand how we are to answer for Him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Let us unite the different parts of our lesson today. It seems to be a comforting message of God's care for us sandwiched in between two serious warnings. The warning against hypocrisy and the fear of man is on one side, and the warning of denying Him and speaking against the Holy Spirit is on the other side. Then He concludes with an encouragement for those times when we conflict with civil powers concerning our faith and how we are to face and answer them. These truths are so vital to us. In these days when holy saints of God are

being surrounded with humanism and unbelief we need to take stock in these direct words of consolation! We need to be purged completely from the fear of man! The worst he can do is to take our life away. And he cannot do that unless God permits it! Although in our humility we scarcely can comprehend the love and care that an Almighty God could have for mortals such as we are, let us strive to believe what Jesus says in our lesson here. God does care for us. He knows what we are going to face in this old wicked world. He knows the pressures, persecutions, ridicule, and suffering that may be heaped upon those who confess and acknowledge Him in this life. There is a day of recompense. People can talk against Christ and they will be forgiven but let them vilify or speak in a vile and slanderous manner against people who are led by the Holy Spirit and see what happens to them. The Holy Spirit is in His saints, and for blinded people to say hard and cruel things about them or to them is to heap the wrath of God upon them. People need to be careful what they say about the children of the most high God! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is very rare indeed for a person to practice hypocrisy for a length of time and not convince himself in the end that he is justified in the matter. It is sad indeed for an individual to follow a hypocritical lifestyle with fervent ardor. This is the type that Christ was referring to—the Pharisees. The apostle Paul was caught up in this situation. He was sincere and diligent in furthering a cause that was actively destroying the followers of God that he professed to serve.

At the time in which Christ spoke this warning, the Roman empire controlled the Jewish nation, although some self government was allowed. The Jewish Sanhedrin maintained some authority and they were greatly influenced by the Pharisees. Christ confronted them in their hypocrisy and was put to death as a result of it. Herein is revealed a characteristic of a hypocrite, even in our day. You will always find that he is out to crucify someone, perhaps not physically, but such do not hesitate to assassinate someone's character.

Jesus instructed that whenever these people "bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing he shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." Jesus practiced this admonition

when He stood before the authorities. Although His very life hung in the balance, He did not justify Himself as there would be a temptation to do at such a time, but submitted all into God's hands.

—Wayne Murphey

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October 14, 1984

BEING PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S COMING

Luke 12:35 I let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Memory Verse: Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Matt. 24:44.

Central Thought: The whole purpose of the child of God is to keep one's self in readiness for the coming of the Lord.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today comes right on the heels of the discourse in which Jesus gave His warnings against covetousness. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Our lesson springs from these words. The second coming of Christ is a great subject in the Bible. Much of the sayings of our lesson are found in Matthew 24. The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 can be found in verses 35 and 36 of our lesson. We notice that the aspect of a servant to his lord is presented in our lesson and in other places. We have also the idea presented of a steward whom his lord has made ruler over his household. The thought of a steward is an important one because a close scriptural study will reveal that this is our position (in a sense) with Christ. Then at the appearing of his lord, who finds him faithful, he is made ruler "over all that he hath." In one of our lessons to follow we will study more on this thought of stewardship. In our society the idea of stewardship is not such a prominent one. The system of free enterprise has helped to erase this from men's minds. They are inclined to suppose that what they possess is their own, but many will wake up too late to realize their error. We are stewards and we own nothing. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." Luke also makes a statement quoting Jesus that we find nowhere else, and it must be rightly balanced. This is found in verses 47 and 48. It concerns the many or few stripes to be administered to those servants who knew or knew not their lord's will. The term stripes is figurative language, driving to the particular point of unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.

QUESTIONS:

1. Wherein lies the real treasure of the child of God?
2. What should we be girded about with, and what is our light?

3. Is it important for us to be constantly aware of the possibility of Christ to come soon?
4. What happens to a person if he loses this regard for the coming of the Lord?
5. What does a steward do in a household? What are we to do with what Christ gives us?
6. What will be required of the one to whom much is given?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There is no way that any of us can console ourselves with the idea that we don't know much and consequently will not be very severely punished. Jesus never meant to say anything that would cause us to have any reason to think thus. In this enlightened age of the New Testament, He is expecting much from us. We are to be faithfully awaiting our Lord's return. Every day this should occupy our thoughts: "Now the Lord may come today. Oh, God, guide me in thy perfect will. Help me to live so that I will be accounted worthy to stand before you in that day." This should be the prime priority of our thoughts. Peter tells us that we should live in all holy conversation and godliness, "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." 2 Pet. 3:11, 12. The Greek word for hasting is "spuedo" from which we get our word speed. It means to urge diligently or earnestly and to wait eagerly. We know how we feel about some delightful event that we are looking forward to. We eagerly look forward to it, don't we? We look forward to a wedding or coming visit from a dear friend or relative. How much more should the coming of the Lord occupy a place in our most endeared expectations! And think about the Lord's feelings about it. He is at the right hand of God looking forward to that great day of fulfillment. Let us stir ourselves and live as if the coming of the Lord was the very next event of our lives. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If we will obey the admonition in the first verse of our lesson, the remainder will fall into place. Often when we speak of letting our lights shine, we do so with the thought of others seeing it. Our lesson today was given for our personal benefit. We should let our light shine that we might avoid the pitfalls of the enemy. Many times Jesus warned His disciples to watch. How much easier to watch if we have the light of God's understanding shining in our hearts! We will not be taken

unaware when it is our time to account for our stewardship.

We must remember that in our stewardship for God, all things belong to Him: our possessions, our family and friends, our time, talents, influence, the goods of nature, and even the grace, mercy, and goodness of God with which we have been so bountifully endowed. It is possible for one who believes in God, and perhaps has experienced salvation to become slack in their souls, rationalizing that all will be well. Such a person will be caught unawares and as Jesus said, their portion will be with the unbelievers. To turn away from our duty at the last will make fruitless all the good that we might have previously accomplished for God. How diligent we should be in our stewardship!

—Wayne Murphey

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October 21, 1984

AN INVITATION TO A GREAT SUPPER

Luke 14:15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Isa. 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Rev. 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Memory Verse: And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. Luke 13:29.

Central Thought: God has invited all men everywhere to partake of the feast of His salvation and grace, but very few can withdraw their minds from carnal pursuits to attend to this invitation.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees to eat on the Sabbath day. He was being closely watched by those in attendance. A certain man who had dropsy was healed on this occasion. Although Luke says that they held their peace, it was evident that they were highly displeased at Jesus for doing this on the Sabbath day. Jesus then counselled with those in attendance when He saw how they chose the chief places at the feast. He told them not to reach for the highest place, but to take the lowest place so that they could be promoted instead of demoted. Then He spoke to the one who invited Him to not call for his rich friends to come to the feast, but to call those who were not able to recompense him, so that his reward could be in the resurrection of the just. These sayings prompted one at the feast to make the statement we have in the first verse of our lesson. Jesus reveals in the parable that He responded with the fact that there are things in people's hearts that will hinder them from taking advantage of the supper of God. From Isaiah we draw a great appeal and invitation, uttered in prophecy. It is a touching, earnest call for souls of men to come to Him and

partake of the good things He is providing. From the last book of the Bible and the closing verses of that book is voiced a final appeal to mankind. There are other expressions in the Scriptures also that make us to know that God is offering to men a wonderful opportunity to eat with Him of the glories and blessing of eternal being. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is God inviting us to?
2. What caused those who were bidden to the feast to decline to come?
3. Did they have the proper regard for the value of the feast?
4. What causes people today to turn away from heaven's invitation?
5. Look at the three things that were used as excuses. Is there any danger in those sort of things today?
6. What is the wine, milk, and fatness that God is offering us today?
7. How do we drink of the water of life?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus gives us this parable to show how people today can so lightly esteem the salvation that He is providing. A lot of work and effort goes into making a supper or feast. There seems to have been no price attached. The only price was to respond, come, and be there. It is that way about the salvation of God. The only price attached is for us to respond and forsake our sins, and come to Him. But, oh, the power of earthly allurements and things that solicit our interests! I am sure that these people would have come to the feast if they had esteemed it profitable, worthwhile, and of great value to them, but they did not count it of much worth. They found something of much more interest to them. They did not really want to come. The One giving the feast meant nothing to them. That is the way it is today in matters concerning souls and their need of God. Our lesson reveals that God will take no pains with the scornful attitude of people who slight and carelessly cast off His offers. He will reach out to those who are hungry. The Jewish nation was given the first invitation to the blessings of the grace of God, but they counted themselves unworthy of everlasting life and cast it from them. The apostles turned to the Gentiles who were glad for the opportunity and glorified the Word of the Lord. (Acts 13:46-48). God

is going to have someone who will love and appreciate His goodness.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is not revealed who made the statement in the first verse of our lesson, but whoever it was, apparently possessed a good understanding of God's salvation. Even Jesus' disciples seemed to have had a difficult time comprehending the spiritual kingdom that was being preached. It is obvious that many who were bidden to the master's supper offered only excuses. The first one said that he had bought a piece of ground and he needed to go see it. I am convinced that the man had already seen the property before he purchased it. You won't find an individual who is any kind of a business man, buying ground, sight unseen. It was just an excuse. The second man stated that he had bought five yoke of oxen and he needed to prove them. Likewise, a good business man who buys work animals will know whether or not they labor well before he buys. The third man declared that he had married a wife and couldn't come. I have an idea that if he had desired to attend the supper he would have asked his wife to accompany him. They both could have enjoyed the feast together. When we stand before the judgment throne of God, excuses will look pretty flimsy. That will be a time of true confession. —Wayne Murphey

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THE YOUNG COTTAGER

Jane S—— was the daughter of poor parents in the village where it pleased God first to cast my lot in the ministry. My acquaintance with her commenced, when she was twelve years of age, by her weekly attendance at my house amongst a number of children whom I invited and regularly instructed every Saturday afternoon.

On the summer evenings I frequently used to assemble this little group out of doors in my garden, sitting under the shade of some trees which protected us from the heat of the sun; from hence a scene appeared which rendered my occupation the more interesting. For adjoining the spot where we sat, and only separated from us by a fence, was the churchyard, surrounded with beautiful prospects in every direction. There lay the mortal remains of thousands, who from age to age, in their different generations, had been successively committed to the grave: earth to earth, ashes, to ashes, dust to dust. Here

the once famed ancestors of the rich and the less known forefathers of the poor lay mingling their dust together—alike awaiting the resurrection from the dead.

I had not far to look for subjects of warning and exhortation suitable to my little flock of lambs that I was feeding. I could point to the heaving sods that marked the different graves and separated them from each other and tell my pupils that, young as they were, none of them were too young to die; and that probably more than half of the bodies which were buried there were those of little children. I hence took occasion to speak of the nature and value of a soul, and to ask them where they expected their souls to go when they departed hence and were no more seen upon earth.

I told them who was “the resurrection and the life” and who alone could take away the sting of death. I used to remind them that the hour was “coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” I often availed myself of these opportunities to call to their recollection the more recent deaths of their own relatives that lay buried so near us. Some had lost a parent, others a brother or sister, some perhaps had lost all these and were committed to the mercy of their neighbours as fatherless or motherless orphans. Such circumstances were occasionally useful to excite tender emotions, favourable to serious impressions.

Sometimes I sent the children to the various stones which stood at the head of the graves and bid them learn the epitaphs inscribed upon them. I took pleasure in seeing the little ones thus dispersed in the churchyard, each committing to memory a few verses written in commemoration of the departed. They would soon accomplish the desired object and eagerly return to me, ambitious to repeat their task. Thus my churchyard became a book of instruction, and every gravestone a leaf of edification for my young disciples.

The church itself stood in the midst of the ground. It was a spacious antique structure. Within those very walls I first proclaimed the message of God to sinners. As these children surrounded me I sometimes pointed to the church, spoke to them of the nature of public worship, the duty of regular attendance on its services, and urged their serious attention to the means of grace. I showed them the sad state of many countries, where neither churches nor Bibles were known, and the no less melancholy condition of multitudes at home, who

sinfully neglect worship and slight the Word of God. I thus tried to make them sensible of their own favours and privileges.

Little Jane used constantly to appear on these weekly seasons of instruction. I made no very particular observations concerning her during the first twelve months or more after her commencement of attendance. She was not then remarkable for any peculiar attainment. On the whole I used to think her rather more slow of apprehension than most of her companions. She usually repeated her tasks correctly but was seldom able to make answers to questions for which she was not previously prepared with replies. Her countenance was not engaging; her eye discovered no remarkable liveliness. She read tolerably well, took pains, and improved in it. Mildness and quietness marked her general demeanour. She was very constant in her attendance on public worship at the church as well as on my Saturday instruction at home. But generally speaking she was little noticed except for her regular and orderly conduct. Had I then been asked of which of my young scholars I had formed the most favourable opinion, poor Jane might have been altogether omitted in the list.

How little do we oftentimes know what God is doing in other people's hearts. What poor calculators and judges we frequently prove till He opens our eyes! His thoughts are not our thoughts; neither our ways His ways. Once, indeed, during the latter part of that year, I was struck with her ready attention to my wishes. I had, agreeably to the plan above mentioned, sent her into the churchyard to commit to memory an epitaph which I admired. On her return she told me that in addition to what I desired, she had also learned another which was inscribed on an adjoining stone, adding that she thought it a very pretty one. I thought so, too and perhaps my readers will be of the same opinion. While I transcribe the lines I can powerfully imagine that I hear her voice repeating them. The idea is exceedingly gratifying to me.

Forgive, blest shade, the tributary tear
That mourns thy exit from a world like this
Forgive the wish that would have kept
thee here
And stayed thy progress to the seats of
bliss.
No more confined to grovelling scenes of
night
No more a tenant pent in mortal clay

Now should we rather hail thy glorious
flight
And trace thy journey to the realms of
day.

The above was her appointed task; and the other which she voluntarily learned and spoke of with pleasure is this:—

It must be so—our father Adam's fall
And disobedience brought this lot on all.
All die in him—But hopeless should we be,
Blest revelation! were it not for thee.
Hail, glorious Gospel! heavenly light
whereby
We live with comfort, and with comfort
die;
And view beyond this gloomy scene, the
tomb,
A life of endless happiness to come.

I afterwards discovered that the sentiment expressed in the latter epitaph had much affected her, but at the period of this little incident I knew nothing of her mind; I had comparatively overlooked her.

I have often been sorry for it since. Conscience seemed to rebuke me when I afterwards discovered what the Lord had been doing for her soul, as if I had neglected her; yet it was not done designedly. She was unknown to us all, except that, as I have since found out, her regularity and abstinence from the sins and follies of her young equals in age and station brought upon her many taunts and jeers from others which she bore very meekly.

It was about fifteen months from the first period of Jane's attendance on my Saturday school when I missed her from her customary place. Two or three weeks had gone by without my making any particular enquiry respecting her. I was at length informed that she was not well; but apprehending no peculiar cause for alarm nearly two months passed away without any further mention of her name being made. At length a poor old woman in the village, of whose religious disposition I had formed a good opinion, came and said to me: "Sir, have you not missed Jane S— at your house on Saturday afternoons?" "Yes," I replied. "I believe she is not well." "Nor ever will be, I fear," said the woman. "What! do you apprehend any danger in the case?" "Sir, she is very poorly indeed, and I

think is in a decline. She wants to see you, Sir, but is afraid you would not come to see such a poor young child as she is."

Not go where poverty and sickness may call me? How can she imagine so? "At which house does she live?" "Sir, it is a poor place and she is ashamed to ask you to come there. Her near neighbors are noisy, wicked people, and her own father and mother are strange folks. They all make game at poor Jenny because she reads her Bible so much." "Do not tell me about poor places and wicked people: that is the very situation where a minister of the gospel is called to do the most good. I shall go to see her; you may let her know my intention." "I will, Sir; I go in most days to speak to her and it does one's heart good to hear her talk." "Indeed!" said I. "What does she talk about, poor thing!" "Why, nothing but good things such as the Bible, and Jesus Christ, and life and death, and her soul, and heaven and hell, and your discourses and the books you used to teach her, Sir. Her father says he'll have no such godly things in his house; and her own mother scoffs at her and says she supposes Jenny counts herself better than other folks. But she does not mind all that. She will read her books, and then talk so pretty to her mother and beg that she would think about her soul."

"The Lord forgive me," thought I, "for not being more attentive to this poor child's case." I seemed to feel the importance of infantine instruction more than ever I had done before and felt a rising hope that this girl might prove a kind of first-fruits of my labours. "I hope, I really hope," said I, "this dear child will prove a true child of God. And if so what a mercy to her, and what a mercy for me!"

The next morning I went to see the child. Her dwelling was of the humblest kind. It stood against a high bank of earth which formed a sort of garden behind it. The front aspect of the cottage was chiefly rendered pleasing by a honeysuckle which luxuriantly climbed up the wall. As I entered the house door its flowers put forth a very sweet and refreshing smell. Intent on the object of my visit, I at the same moment offered up silent prayer to God and entertained a hope that the welcome fragrance of the shrub might be illustrative of that all-prevailing intercession of a Redeemer, which I trusted was, in the case of this little child, as "a sweet-smelling savour" to her heavenly Father. The very flowers and leaves of the garden and field are emblematical of higher things when grace teaches us to make them so.

(To Be Continued)

October 28, 1984

COUNTING THE COST

Luke 14:25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

Matt. 10:34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and daughter in law against her mother in law.

36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Memory Verse: For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Matt. 16:26.

Central Thought: Going all the way for Jesus Christ is a costly venture and should not be entered into lightly. A person should take time to ponder and think it through, counting

what it will cost to follow Christ and what the cost will be for not following Him.

Word Definitions: *Hate* (father and mother): This word cannot mean the passion that is associated with strife and murder. It rather means to love less, implying that our love and devotion for Christ must supercede our love for everyone else. *Ambassage*: A representative, ambassador, embassy.

LESSON BACKGROUND

As Christ slowly made His way southward toward Jerusalem and the fateful events that soon were to unfold, many people became attracted to His company. This was, no doubt, because of the great wonders He had done before their very eyes. Jesus was not against people following Him, but He sought in our lesson today to caution them in their rapturous enthusiasm of the cost that would be required for each one to pay. Although this salvation was to be the free gift of God for all humanity, yet He knew that for a person to effectively and successfully lay hold of it, it would require the strongest and highest devotion that man could ever muster. He also knew that the cross-current of other loves and interests would ever be a threat to that tie that He willed to bind them to Him. Counting the cost is an indispensable thing. Too many people are emotionally drawn to Christ in a big meeting only to fizzle out in the face of realities to be met when they return to their homes. Jesus did not beat around the bush about it. He came right out in the open with it. He wants people to know what they are doing. He gave two illustrations to bear out this point, and ended up with a dire warning that unless a person forsakes everything, there is no way he can be a follower of Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is a person in danger of when the cost is not counted?
2. What should a person do first before any venture?
3. What does the expression "sit down first" indicate?
4. What is the bad thing about starting something and not finishing it?
5. How can we send a message to the coming King and desire conditions of peace? Who is the coming King?
6. In what way are a man's foes they of his own house?
7. How is the only way we can be worthy of Christ?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus Christ implements various means to draw people to Him. His goodness, power, doctrine, hope, and kindness, show forth the desire that He has for people and what He wills for them, but in all these avenues to Christ there stands the cross. The cross stands for the turning away from the world and the severing of every tie that would bind one to earth. It is one great matter to acknowledge Christ as our Lord and Saviour, but a greater one to follow it through all the way. There are unseen obstacles that must be overcome. This unknown factor must be reckoned with. It is a wise thing to ponder deeply your committment to Christ and a start for Him. A man who is building a house or structure for use sits down first and does some figuring. He figures the cost of the material and the cost of the labor involved. This takes time, but it is time well spent. Perhaps the more he examines the building and its perspective use, the greater will be his desire and determination to execute the task of building it. This is true with Christ and the building of an experience with Him. The trouble with many of our day is that they do not think. People are used to pursuing objects of fleshly enjoyment with no thought of the outcome or aftermath. One cannot be thus when it comes to Christ and being a part of His kingdom. The illustration of the king meeting a mightier king is a good one. He sits down to consult with his advisors about this matter. He finally decides that the campaign against this king will mean nothing but loss and disaster to him. So it is with us and Christ. The only wise thing to do is to send an ambassage of faith, prayer, and repentance so as to make peace with the King of kings.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is just good business sense to count the cost before beginning a project. The disadvantages must be weighed against the advantages. We are told in our lesson of some of the things that we must give up: father, mother, wife, children, brethren, and sisters. This is quite a cost. This does not mean that when we are saved, these individuals automatically become our enemies or that we should set out to make them so. We should endeavor to cultivate good relationships with our relatives. Many times an unsaved relative will respect the stand of a Christian. God is looking for willingness. If living saved should cause a rift in family association, it still pays to

live right. Think of the great family of God that you are adopted into.

Jesus said that we must hate even our own lives. Down through history, certain religions have taught that the more one punishes his body through self-denial, the closer to God one becomes. This is the type of thing that Martin Luther fought in the Catholic Church. Self-denial in and of itself is not godliness. Refusal to pamper those things that hinder and drain one's spirituality is godliness. Even if there are things that must be laid aside which are attractive to the flesh, God still has an enjoyable life for us to live. Along with the cross that we must bear, is much contentment and peace. Living for God does not cost; it pays! "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Prov. 10:22.
—Wayne Murphey

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November 4, 1984

THE PRODIGAL SON AND HIS BROTHER

Luke 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned

against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Memory Verse: I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Luke 15:7.

Central Thought: There is a danger of a person having and manifesting a wrong spirit and attitude even though he or she does not go out into the deep ways of sin.

Word Definitions: *Kissed:* Fervently, earnestly kissed him again and again. *Musick and dancing:* The Greek word which is "choron" for this means singers and the word for music is "symphony" which denotes musical instruments.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is very evident that Jesus is directing this parable to the Jews because of the self-righteous pride in themselves and the "holier than thou" attitude that they held toward others who were, as they thought, inferior. In the first ten verses of this chapter preceding our lesson text, we see the publicans and sinners drawing near for to hear Jesus. This being very repulsive to the scribes and Pharisees, they voiced their disapproval. Jesus answered them with a double similitude about a shepherd looking for his lost sheep and a house wife searching for a lost coin. Jesus, in both related cases, declared that the joy that was in heaven among the angels and before God over just one sinner that repents, is even more than those who are already in the fold of God. This set the stage for this account of the man and his two sons. This story of the prodigal son is a most profound example of the downdraft of this wicked world and its eventual utter contempt. Give a man a sum of money, take away his morals, self respect, and restraint, and you will see a case history of ridiculous shame and dishonor. The possession of the wealth and the deceitful glitter of the fleshly attractions of the world blinds the soul to the snares beneath. Too often, attention is fixed on the prodigal and his story, and little is considered concerning his brother. It would do just as well to look into this elder brother. The younger brother is a type of one going out into deep sin. Who does the elder brother typify? What was really wrong with the Pharisees? Let us seek to find the answer to these questions. Let us take heed that we not find ourselves as this older brother: unmerciful, unforgiving, and self-righteous.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Can you tell what Jesus' purpose was in telling this parable?
2. What things could you say caused this younger son to take this action?
3. What does this show about the world and the peril of riches?
4. What condition prevailed that changed this young man's attitude?
5. What was his attitude as he returned home to his father?
6. Why was the elder son not willing to go in and rejoice?
7. What kind of attitude did he show up to have?
8. How can this kind of spirit show up in us now?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Here we have two different kinds of people: one who runs away and leaves home, and one who stays home. There is peril and danger in both conditions. Although the Jews had striven in various ways to be God's people, somehow the spirit of pride had crept in and stained their good morality. This can happen very easily to anyone. We should test our souls by examining our attitude toward sinners and those without. Let us guard ourselves from a haughty "look down on" attitude.

Those who repent and turn from the wicked ways of life must be welcomed with open arms by those who have wisely refrained from the wicked way. He has come and preached peace to those afar off and to those who are nigh. We have no reason to boast of or vaunt anything of ourselves. This lesson is a warning to all of us. Note the merciful attitude of the father toward both of his sons. He shamed neither one. He lovingly forgave the erring, and gently entreated the faithful son.

This truly is the Spirit of God toward all. The angels and the righteous rejoice in the reconciliation of sinners. It's a feast of joy, music and singing to the heart to welcome in the wanderer to the fold of God. I am persuaded that the saints in paradise share the glad tidings of souls being saved here. Praise the Lord for all His redeeming power!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We cannot condemn the natural response of the prodigal son's elder brother, but we can fault his attitude. Notice that the brother would not be entreated. This is an attitude that all of us must watch. If it becomes apparent that people shrink from the thought of discussing some matter with us, then we should check our attitude. You will notice that the brother really had some logical reasons for not attending the feast. However, when we examine them closer, we find that they were really carnal reasons. Living for God is a way of self-denial; not that the Christian life means that we have no more rights as a human being, but that we are easy to get along with. The Christian does not demand his rights before all others. If he does, he can be assured of acquiring some bad attitudes.

The elder brother was actually a good son. He stayed by his father, he was responsible, he worked in the fields, and I

am sure he was commendable in many ways. From the way that our story is worded, it would lead us to believe that the inheritance was divided between both sons. The elder could have yielded to the temptation to spend some himself, but it is not recorded that he did. We find people with a Christian profession today who attend church on a regular basis, work hard for the furtherance of the gospel, give of their financial means, are responsible, are unattracted by the world, and yet, these things alone do not insure anyone a home in heaven. We must maintain a proper attitude toward our fellow man.

—Wayne Murphey

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November 11, 1984

JESUS GIVES A LESSON ON STEWARDSHIP

Luke 16:1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous

mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Memory Verse: As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Pet. 4:10.

Central Thought: God wants us not to be covetous or selfish with the material wealth that He puts in our hands. We are to make friends with it by giving and distributing to others in need, and laying up treasures in heaven where we need everlasting habitations.

Word Definitions: *Steward:* A house-distributor, manager, or overseer. *Stewardship:* Administration or management of a household or estate. The Greek word is "oikonomia" from which our English word "economy" is derived. *Mammon:* Wealth, riches, or money.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The lesson we must consider today was evidently given at the same occasion as our last week's study about the prodigal son. There seems to be no intermission shown, except that He spoke these words to His disciples, while the parable of the prodigal was directed to the Pharisees. It is a very important truth that Christ is directing to us today. And, as He so often has done before, He presents it to us in a parable. The thought of stewardship is not a new one in the Scriptures. The first stewardship was that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God put man in the garden to dress (till) and keep it. It was to be in man's hands as to what the garden would develop into. Survey every person in Bible history who made a success with their Maker. They were stewards, every one of them. God never planned for man to just live a life of beholding and admiring the beautiful works of God. There was responsibility instituted for man to bear. Every man is a steward of himself, but there are some people accumulate enough so as to need others to assist in the management. Such is in our lesson and such is Christ. He has the stewardship, the wealth, the economy of the grace of God for the salvation of men. He is calling men to follow Him to whom He will

bestow a part in His great economy. As our lesson implies, however, He cannot and will not bestow His spiritual wealth upon those who do not handle and use the natural wealth wisely and properly. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What had the steward been accused of?
2. Was he dismissed from his position and put out right away? What was he given a chance to do?
3. What was his predicament and peril?
4. Why did he not want to dig or beg?
5. What was the course of action that he chose to take, and why did he decide on such a course?
6. Are we, as mortals, in any kind of state similar to this steward?
7. What should we do with the wealth of this life, and why?
8. Does our use of money have any bearing on our spiritual life? Why?
9. Why cannot a man serve God and money?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is very important to get the picture that Christ is setting before us. Here is this steward called to question about his work, status, and security. Take this word "security" fully in mind. This is the crux of our whole lesson. This man is not only losing his job; but his security is at stake. "What shall I do?" He had to think quickly and wisely. He had just a little time. There seems to have been no question about his guilt. He was inevitably going to be put out. His disposition of heart would not allow him to go out and take up common labor. He decided what course to take. He had time to do it, too. Calling the people who owed something to his lord, he began, one by one, to cut down their bill. To the one owing 100 measures of oil, he cut it down 50%. To the one owing 100 measures of wheat, he struck it down to 80. He still had time and the power to do this. In other words, he used the wealth he was about to be deprived of (while he still had it) to make friends with people so as to gain their favor and hospitality when he was finally put out. When you get a full picture of this, you can see how Jesus applies it to us and our use of the financial wealth that will soon be taken away from us when we leave this world. We are to use it for the good of others: sharing, distributing, communicating, and giving out. You lose when

you do not give. The selfish and greedy are sure to wind up paupers in the end. The liberal and kind-hearted will be richly rewarded with eternal habitations. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The 8th and 9th verses of our lesson may be difficult to understand unless they are taken in context and viewed in the proper light. It states that the lord, or the master of the unjust steward, commended him because he had done wisely. Jesus was not commending this steward because he was sly, crafty, and cunning, but there was a deeper meaning to it. Jesus went on to declare that, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." As Jesus looked about Him, He saw people in the world who were industrious and were using their time, talents, and all of their energies to lay up securities to fall back on in their latter years. People of that time were diligent concerning the future. Jesus wanted His disciples to have this same diligence, not in laying up earthly store, but in laying up treasures in heaven.

Jesus went on to say, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." If you make friends, you are very diligent to handle them carefully and wisely. This is what we are to do with the "unrighteous mammon." One interpretation of "unrighteous mammon" is "the mammon of injustice." The things of this world are bright and glittering and they seemingly hold much to be desired. However, they are deceptive in that they do not bring peace of mind. The rest of the verse says, "that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitation." The Septuagint uses the word "die" for "fail". "Everlasting habitation" plainly means eternal home. Simply stated, this verse could be paraphrased to say, "Handle the things of the world carefully so that when you die, you will be accepted into heaven." —Wayne Murphey

THE YOUNG COTTAGER

(Continued From Page 15)

Jane was in bed upstairs. I found no one in the house with her except the woman who had brought me the message on the evening before. The instant I looked on the girl I perceived a very marked change in her countenance: it had acquired the consumptive hue, both white and red. A delicacy unknown to it before quite surprised me, owing to the alteration it produced in her look. She received me first with a very sweet smile and then instantly burst into a flood of tears, just sobbing out: "I am so glad to see you, Sir." "I am very much concerned at your being so ill my child, and grieved that I was not sooner aware of your state. But I hope the Lord designs it for your good." Her eye, not her tongue, powerfully expressed: "I hope and think He does."

"Well, my poor child, since you can no longer come to see me, I will come and see you, and we will talk over the subjects which I have been used to explain to you." "Indeed, Sir, I shall be so glad." "That I believe she will," said the woman, "for she loves to talk of nothing so much as what she has heard you say in your sermons and in the books you have given her."

"Are you really desirous, my dear child, to be a true Christian?" "Oh yes, yes, Sir; I am sure that I desire that above all things." I was astonished and delighted at the earnestness and simplicity with which she spoke these words. "Sir," added she, "I have been thinking as I lay on my bed for many weeks past how good you are to instruct us poor children—What must become of us without it." "I am truly glad that my instructions have not been lost upon you, and pray God that this your present sickness may be an instrument of blessing in His hands to prove, humble, and sanctify you. My dear child, you have a soul, an immortal soul to think of. You remember what I have often said to you about the value of a soul: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.' "

"Yes, Sir, I remember well you told us that when our bodies are put into the grave our souls will then go either to the good or the bad place." "And to which of these places do you think that, as a sinner in the sight of God you deserve to go." "To the bad one, Sir." "What! to everlasting destruction!" "Yes, Sir." "Why so?" "Because I am a great sinner." "And must all great sinners go to hell?" "They all deserve it and I

am sure I do." "But is there no way of escape? Is there no way for a great sinner to be saved?" "Yes, Sir, Christ is the Savior." "And do you believe in Christ yourself?" "I do not know, Sir, I wish I did; but I feel that I love Him." "What do you love Him for?" "Because He is good to poor children's souls like mine." "What has He done for you?" "He died for me, Sir; and what could He do more?" "And what do you hope to gain by His death?" "A good place when I die if I believe in Him and love Him."

"Have you felt any uneasiness an account of your soul?" "Oh yes, Sir, a great deal. When you used to talk to us children on Saturdays I often felt as if I could hardly bear it and wondered that others could seem careless. I thought I was not fit to die. I thought of all the bad things I had ever done and said and believed God must be very angry with me, for you often told us that God would not be mocked and that Christ said if we were not converted, we could not go to heaven. Sometimes I thought I was so young it did not signify and then again it seemed to me a great sin to think so, I could see that my heart was not right and how could such a heart be fit for heaven? Indeed, Sir, I used to feel very uneasy."

"My dear Jenny, I wish I had known all this before. Why did you never tell me about it?" "Sir, I durst not. Indeed, I could not well say what was the matter with me and I thought you would look upon me as very bold if I had spoken about myself to such a gentleman as you, yet I often wished that you knew what I felt and feared. Sometimes as we went away from your house I could not help crying and then the other children laughed and jeered at me and said I was going to be very good, they supposed, or at least to make people think so. Sometimes, Sir, I fancied you did not think so well of me as of the rest and that hurt me, yet I knew I deserved no particular favour because I was the chief of sinners."

"My dear, what made St. Paul say he was the chief of sinners? Can you repeat the verse?" " 'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' is not that right, Sir?" "Yes, my child, it is right; remember now and for evermore that 'Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners.' " "Sir, I am so glad He did. It makes me hope that He will save me though I am a poor sinful girl. Sir, I am very ill and I do not think I shall ever get well again. I want to go to Christ if I die." "Go to Christ while you live, my dear child, and He will not cast you away when you die. He said, 'Suffer little children to come

unto me,' waits to be gracious to them, and forbids them not. What made you think so seriously about the state of your soul?" "Your talking about the graves in the churchyard and telling us how many young children were buried there. I remember you said one day, nearly twelve months ago; 'Children, where will you be a hundred years hence? Children, where do you think you shall go when you die? Children, if you were to die tonight, are you sure you should go to Christ and be happy?' Sir, I shall never forget your saying 'Children' three times together in that solemn way."

"Did you ever before that day feel any desire about your soul?" "Yes, Sir, I think I first had that desire almost as soon as you began to teach us on Saturday afternoons but on that day I felt as I never did before. I shall never forget it. All the way as I went home and all that night these words were in my thoughts: 'Children, where do you think you shall go when you die?' I thought I must leave off all my bad ways or where shall I go when I die?" "And what effect did these thoughts produce in your mind?" "Sir, I tried to live better and I did leave off many bad ways, but the more I strove the more difficult I found it; my heart seemed so hard and then I could not tell anyone my case." "Could you not tell it to the Lord who hears and answers prayers?" "My prayers" (here she blushed and sighed) "are very poor at the best and at that time I scarcely knew how to pray at all as I ought. But I did sometimes ask the Lord for a better heart."

There was a character in all this conversation which marked a truly sincere and enlightened state of mind. She spoke with all the simplicity of a child and yet the seriousness of a Christian. I could scarcely persuade myself that she was the same girl. Her countenance was filled with interesting affections and always spoke much more than her tongue could utter. She now possessed an ease and liberty in speaking to which she had formerly been a stranger. The marks of a divine change were too prominent to be easily mistaken and in this very child I for the first time witnessed the evident testimonies of such a change

"Sir," continued little Jane, "I had one day been thinking that I was neither fit to live nor die, for I could find no comfort in this world and was sure I ~~deserved~~ none in the other. On that day you sent me to learn the verse on Mrs. B.'s headstone and then I read that on the one next to it." "I very well remember, Jenny, you came back and repeated them both to

me." "There were two lines which abode with me," "Which were they?"

Hail glorious Gospel, heavenly light,
whereby
We live with comfort, and with comfort
die.

"I wished that glorious gospel was mine that I might live and die with comfort, and it seemed as if I thought it might be so. I never felt so happy in all my life before." "My dear child, what is the meaning of the word 'Gospel?' " "Good news." "Good news for whom?" "For wicked sinners, Sir." "Who sends this good news for wicked sinners?" "The Lord Almighty." "And who brings this good news?" "Sir, you brought it to me."

Here my soul melted in an instant and I could not repress the tears. The last answer was equally unexpected and affecting. I felt a father's tenderness and gratitude for a new and first-born child. Jane wept likewise. After a little pause she said: "Oh Sir, I wish you would speak to my father and mother and little brother, for I am afraid they are going on very badly. I then prayed with the child and promised to visit her constantly.

Little Jane's illness was of a lingering nature. I often visited her. At one visit I found her in bed reading Dr. Watt's Hymns for children. "What are you reading this morning, Jane?" "Sir, I have been thinking very much about some verses. Here they are:—

There is an hour when I must die
Nor do I know how soon 'twill come;
A thousand children young as I
Are called by death to hear their doom.
Let me improve the hours I have
Before the day of grace is fled;
There's no repentance in the grave
Nor pardon offered to the dead.

Sir, I feel all that to be very true and I am afraid I do not improve the hours as I ought to do."

Disease was making rapid inroads upon her and she was aware of it. But as the outward man decayed she was strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man. She was evidently ripening fast for a better world.

(To Be Continued)

November 18, 1984

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Memory Verse: The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath. Prov. 15:24.

Central Thought: While in this present life we choose our abode in eternity. There are but two places to go in eternity. One is in heaven where all the faithful and true will be, and

the other is in eternal torment for all who refuse to go the way of salvation.

Word Definitions: *Sumptuously:* Radiantly, brilliantly, luxuriously. *Purple:* A very costly form of garment. *Gulf:* A chasm or vacancy, an impassable space or interval.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There are some who have raised a question as to the presence of this story in this part of the Saviour's discourse, and there are many who would doubtless like to discredit it all together and exclude it from holy writings. In reality, though, there is nothing in this story that conflicts with any Bible principle or truth. It certainly does go along with the lesson of the unjust steward in the first part of this chapter. We might be able to find a parallel in this with the prodigal son and his brother. The rich man could be likened unto the self-righteous Jews while the beggar could refer to the Gentiles. However this might be applied, we recognize in this account a warning and an insight to the realities of the realm of departed souls. We cannot actually label this a parable although it has been called thus. "There was a certain rich man. . . ." "There was a certain beggar named Lazarus. . . ." The Pharisees who were covetous, derided Jesus for His teachings on stewardship, but Jesus rebuked them for their justification of themselves and warned them that that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in God's sight. He stated that the kingdom of God which was preached since the days of John had to be pressed into. Matt. 11:12, puts it: "The violent take it by force." Jesus also made a short statement concerning a man who committed adultery by putting away his wife and marrying another. He said that he that marries her that is put away committeth adultery. Then He spoke this lesson that we will consider today. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Does our lesson say anything about the morals of the rich man?
2. What was the common incident that happened to both of these men?
3. Was the beggar's condition an indication of God's displeasure with him?
4. What do you think is referred to by "Abraham's bosom"?
5. What is Abraham to the faithful?

6. What was the rich man tormented by?
7. What was the beggar's desire from the rich man?
8. What was the rich man's desire in hell from Lazarus? Can you see the similarity between the two?
9. What were the two reasons for the rich man's desire not to be granted?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Although there may be various parallels that can be drawn from this part of the Scripture, let us face it in its own light and challenge. There is life, awareness, existence, and a reckoning after death. When a person dies he becomes aware of the world beyond. He sees, feels, tastes, and hears. He can think and he can remember. He can see in the distant what he might have enjoyed instead of what he must suffer. His mind is filled with woe and regret. Just a drop of water or mercy looks good to him now. In his life-time of luxury and plenty, a drop of water would have meant nothing. The poor man thought that a crumb from the rich man's table would have been great, but now the tables are turned. The state of affairs in the lives of these men were short-lived. They have now both gone to their long home; they are in eternity at the present moment. The five brothers of this rich man have since then taken their journey to that long home. We know not whether they took advantage of God's dispensation to them which was the law of Moses and the prophets. Probably they were like so many of their day who were not aware of the value of the law and the prophets. I am sure that the rich man was not aware of it. Had he possessed a love and a devotion for God's Word, he would have sought to ease the beggar's woes and thus make friends with that earthly mammon for eternal habitations! So it is with the general run of humanity today. They seem not to be aware of eternal destinies. They live for the present life, unaware of the terrible realities that await them when they leave this mortal flesh. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

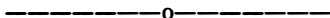
Every day we are making choices. Someday all of these small choices will be computed and the final analysis will determine where we have chosen to spend eternity. God has not established the laws of life and death so that we can choose to live for this world and then choose heaven at the hour of death. We must continually, from day to day, choose

righteousness so that our choice in the end will be eternity with God.

Once a girl who wanted some of the candy that her little brother had, set out to flatter him in the hopes of obtaining it. "Oh, Richard," she said, "You're so tall and strong. You're like Goliath!" "Do you really think I'm that big?" said the pleased youngster. "Oh, yes." "But Goliath must have been nine feet tall," he said doubtfully. "And so are you!" responded his sister. "If I can prove it, can I have some candy?" "Sure!" came the eager reply. "Take off your shoe and I'll measure you," said the clever flatterer. When the boy did, his sister used it to appraise his height. "See, you're nine feet tall!" she exclaimed. Happily the boy handed over some candy and ran to his mother with the news. "Mother, Mother, I'm nine feet tall!" he said excitedly. His mother replied, "Don't talk nonsense." "But I really am; Sister measured me." "How did she measure you?" asked his mother. "Oh, she took my shoe and figured it out that way." "Oh, I understand now," said his mother. "But, son, your measuring tool was not the right one."

In our every-day life, the world will flatter us and offer us self-gratification for the asking. Many people choose these things for the fleeting pleasure, without seriously considering that their choice will result in everlasting punishment. As we make choices, we *must* use the right measuring tool. Ask yourself, "How does this line up with eternity?" If we do this, things will stay in their right perspective. Choose those things that are the finer things of life—those things that are wholesome and uplifting. Such choices will enable us to share an eternal place with Lazarus.

—Wayne Murphey



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November 25, 1984

A LESSON ON THANKSGIVING

Luke 17:3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

8 And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off.

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Memory Verse: In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thess. 5:18.

Central Thought: God does not need us, but we surely need Him, and we need to express our thanks to Him faithfully and be appreciative of all the favors of His goodness.

Word Definitions: *Sycamine tree:* Probably sycamore tree was meant here, although some translators believe that mulberry was the real word. *I trow not:* I think not. *Leprosy:* A disease affecting the skin with swelling and breaking open into sores.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus has just warned the disciples about offences that were to come, stating that the one through whom they were to come would suffer great woe. Our lesson begins with Christ's warning to forgive our brother. He does not use quite as strong language as He does in Matthew 18:21, 22, where He said to forgive seventy times seven times. Here He only states to forgive seven times for a trespass, but it was enough to cause a great concern in the hearts of the disciples. It brought forth from them a petition for a faith increase. The faith of a mustard seed is that which increases and thrives accordingly. In our seeking God, there must be an ever-increasing fervency and devotion. Luke here gives the discourse concerning us being unprofitable servants. Nowhere else in the accounts of Christ do we find this thought, but it is an important one. It really links up with the idea of thanksgiving. We are not to expect God to thank us for anything. The righteous ways that we are to take are that which we are supposed to do. We are not profiting God, but He is profiting us. Jesus was still on His journey toward Jersusalem. He encountered these ten lepers. In His compassion He healed them all. Knowing that they were quarantined from society, He told them to go and show themselves to the priests. The priests alone could give them liberty to go back home. Their going to the priests offered proof of the faith, and they were healed in so going. Just one out of the ten, however, thought to turn back and offer thanks and praise to God. Jesus must have expected them all to turn back and offer thanks, for He said, "Where are the nine?" Let us take heed that we not fail in any of these three lessons before us today. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How should we feel about the good things we do in obedience to God?
2. Why did the leprous men stand "afar off"?
3. What kind of association did these men have with society?
4. Why did Jesus tell them to go and show themselves to the priests?
5. How was their obedience an evidence of their faith?
6. Why did the nine not return to offer thanks?
7. What danger does this warn us of?
8. Why is expressing our thanks to God so important?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Leprosy was a dreaded disease. It was a communicable disease through continued contact with the infected person. It affected the layers of the skin and raised lumps, or nodules, that eventually swelled to open into terrible sores. The infected areas spread, and the disease worsened. Fingers, toes, and even arms rotted off. It was a loathsome disease that was feared by all. It is a type of the disease of sin in the soul of man. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Physician, healed leprosy in an instant, however. The ten men in our lesson had no doubt been apart from their families for some time. They had to keep apart from the society of people and always had to warn people not to come close. Can you just imagine what a miserable existence that they eked out from day to day? They had, no doubt, heard about Jesus and His great power to heal. Thus they cried out for mercy. As they obeyed Christ's command to go show themselves to the priests, they were healed. In the minds of all of them was the great desire to hasten home to their families. Nine of them followed that desire but forgot something. They forgot to come back to Jesus and thank Him. The one who did remember to offer thanks for his healing was probably the least esteemed of all as he was a Samaritan. He fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus and raised his voice in gratitude and praise, thanking God for deliverance. Oh, how we need to have and retain a thankful heart! We should count our blessings and offer our thanks to God not only at Thanksgiving time, but every day throughout the year.

—Leslie C. Busbee

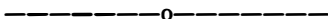
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God has two dwelling places: one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart. It is a humble mind from which thanksgiving will naturally spring. Notice those about you that are proud and exalted. Such individuals are so pre-occupied with pronouncing their attainments that they have no time to be thankful. Many times they not only fail to be thankful, but are unable to recognize the things to be thankful for.

I am reminded of what H. W. Beecher wrote: "If one should give me a dish of sand, and tell me there were particles of iron in it, I might look for them with my eyes, and search for them with my clumsy fingers, and be unable to detect them; but let me take a magnet and sweep through it, and how would it draw to itself the almost invisible particles by the mere power of attraction! The unthankful heart, like my finger in the sand, discovers no mercies; but let the thankful heart sweep through the day, and as the magnet finds the iron, so it will find, in every hour, some heavenly blessings, only the iron in God's sand is gold."

Always keep in mind that the worship, the sacrifice, and the service that are the most acceptable to God come from a thankful heart.

—Wayne Murphy



December 2, 1984

ANOTHER LESSON ON BEING PREPARED

Luke 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded:

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the house top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 Remember Lot's wife.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

Memory verse: A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished. Prov. 22:3.

Central Thought: The world in general will not be looking for or expecting the coming of Christ. They will be burrowed in fleshly and material pursuits of pleasure and gain, just as the people in Noah's and Lot's days. Those who are cut loose from the binding influences of this world are the only ones who will escape the destruction of that day.

Word Definitions: *Observation:* Scrupulous, outward show or evidence. *Brimstone:* Burning sulphur.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus and His disciples are on the journey to Jerusalem. He had just cleansed ten lepers. The Pharisees, no doubt impressed by these miracles, demanded that He tell them just when the kingdom of God should come. Adam Clarke has some very good notes on this: "The kingdom of God, the glorious religion of the Messiah, does not come in such a way as to be discerned only by sagacious critics, or is only to be seen by those who are scrupulously watching for it; it is not such a nature as to be confined to one place, so that men might say of it, 'Behold, it is only here, or only there': for the kingdom of God is publicly revealed; and behold it is among you; I proclaim it publicly, and work those miracles which

prove that the kingdom of God is come; and none of these things are done in a corner." Seeing that the kingdom of God was before these people already and they had not recognized it, Jesus turned to His disciples with a discourse on a parallel thought concerning readiness for His second coming. Just as the kingdom of God came and was not recognized, even so the coming of the Lord is going to take people by surprise in that last great day. There is much opinion that what Jesus speaks about here and in other places (Matthew 24 and Luke 21) was concerning the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans which occurred in A.D. 70. Although this may be true (one can study up on this through history and the works of Josephus), yet we see such a parallel force of counsel and warning concerning His second coming that this is the main point of our discussion today. It is going to mean a lot for us to be ready when the Lord comes again.—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the error in the Pharisees demanding of Christ when the kingdom of God should come?
2. Why does the kingdom of God not come with outward show?
3. Why is it foolish to expect to prepare one's self for Christ's coming when He at last appears?
4. What were the people doing in Noah's day? What about in Lot's day?
5. What could you say of their attitude toward Noah and his warning message?
6. What is the feeling that we should have toward our material things of life in relation to Christ's coming?
7. What is there about Lot's wife that we should remember?
8. Who is it that will actually preserve and save his life after all?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The coming of the Lord will take place quickly. One will have no time to pray for forgiveness or to fix up any wrongs. Just like lightning flashes so suddenly and lightens up the skies and the earth, so will the coming of Jesus take place suddenly and with no warning. I had a camera once that had a time exposure function in which the shutter could be opened and held open. I wanted to take a picture of a flash of lightning. During a storm one dark night, I stood out in the open

with my camera pointed toward the landscape with the shutter open. In a little while a bright flash of lightning lit up everything. I was ready for it, and got a good picture. I thought that this was a good object lesson on us being ready to meet the Lord. I could not have gotten that picture if I had waited until the flash of lightning came before I opened the shutter. For us to be ready to meet the Lord, we must open our hearts to Him now. We must get ready and stay ready. We must keep it on our minds always: "This may be the day that the Lord will come. Oh, Lord, help me to be ready to meet thee!" This should be our prayer every day. People in the world around us seem to have an indifferent attitude just as the people of long ago did. They do not want to be bothered with thoughts of the coming of Christ and an interruption of their daily grind. They do not want to be changed or conformed to His standard of life. Oh, think of the destruction that will soon ensnare the throngs of this earth. Picture a big crowd at a sports event all engrossed in the game to suddenly be swept upon by the Lord in flaming fire and His mighty angels! Let us not be as Lot's wife who hung on to the things of her life in her heart. Although she had bodily left Sodom, the love of those things was in her heart. The housetop and the field could be figures of prayer and service to God. People in those days went up on the housetop to pray. All of our stuff and property must be consecrated to God. It will all perish in that day.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It will mean much to be ready when our time on this earth comes to a close. We have no knowledge of the manner in which our life may cease. Some people seem to believe that they will be able to make things right on their death bed. A death bed is not assured to anyone. There are many who die suddenly. It could be that the second coming of Christ will occur in our generation. At that moment, the day of mercy will be over. As our memory verse states, it is the prudent person who is careful of evil and is spared the destruction.

In the Old Testament we read that the Israelites erected walls around their cities and established watchmen on them in order to prevent a surprise attack. The watchman would sound the alarm at the sight of the enemy and because of the walls, the soldiers were able to wage an effective defense. As we wait for the coming of our Lord, whether it be a personal

call or the second coming, we, too, must set a watch over our souls to recognize evil. We must have the walls of salvation erected about us so that we can quench the fiery darts of the enemy. If we will do this, we will not be caught in iniquity as were the people of Lot and Noah's day. Punishment was not passed upon them simply because they were eating, drinking, giving in marriage, buying, selling, planting, and building; but because they were neglecting their souls.

—Wayne Murphey

THE YOUNG COTTAGER

(Continued From Page 30)

The next morning I went to Jane's cottage. On entering the door the woman who so frequently visited her met me and said: "Perhaps, Sir, you will not wake her just yet for she has dropped asleep and she seldom gets much rest, poor girl!"

I went gently upstairs. The child was in a half-sitting posture with her Bible open before her. She had evidently fallen asleep while reading. I approached without waking her and observed that she had been reading the twenty-third chapter of St. Luke. The finger of her left hand lay upon the book pointing at these words: "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." "Is this casual or designed?" thought I. "Either way it is remarkable."

She half awoke from her dozing state, but not sufficiently to perceive that any person was present and said in a kind of whisper: "Lord remember me, remember me, remember, remember a poor child, Lord remember me." She then suddenly started and perceived me as she became fully awake. "Mrs. K—, how long have I been asleep?—Sir, I am very sorry." "And I am very glad to find you thus," I replied. "What were you reading?" "The history of the crucifixion of Jesus, Sir." "How far had you read when you fell asleep?" "To the prayer of the thief that was crucified with Him and thought what a mercy it would be if the Lord should remember me likewise—and so I fell asleep; and I fancied in my dream that I saw Christ upon the cross. And I thought I said: 'Lord remember me,' and I am sure He did not look angry upon me."

The visit was sweet and solemn. The countenance and manner of the child evinced powerful feelings. Tears mingled with smiles, resignation brightened by hope, humility animated by faith, a childlike modesty adorned with the understand-

ing of a riper age, gratitude, peace, devotion, patience—all these were visible.

"Sir," said the child, "I wish you could speak to my mother when you come again. I am so grieved about her soul and I am afraid she cares nothing at all about herself." "I hope I shall have an opportunity the next time I come. Farewell, my child." "Goodbye, Sir, and I thank you for all your kindness to me."

"Surely," I thought as I left the cottage, "this young bud of grace will bloom beautifully in paradise! The Lord transplant her thither in His own good time."

At a very early hour one morning I was awakened by a messenger bringing an urgent request that I would immediately go to the child as her end appeared to be just approaching. On arriving at the house I found no one below. I paused for a few minutes and heard the girl's voice very faintly saying: "Do you think he will come? I should be so very glad to see him before I die."

I ascended the stairs—her father, mother, and brother, and the elderly woman before spoken of were in the room. Jane's countenance bore the marks of speedy dissolution. The moment she saw me a renewed vigour beamed in her eye; grateful affection sparkled in the dying face. For some time she was silent but never took her eyes off me. At length she said: "This is very kind, Sir. I am going fast—I was afraid I should never see you again in this world." I said, "My child, are you resigned to die?" "Quite." "Where is your hope?" She lifted up her finger, pointed to heaven and then directed the same downward to her own heart, saying successively as she did so: "Christ there, and Christ here." These words, accompanied by the action spoke her meaning more solemnly than can easily be conceived.

A momentary spasm took place. To her weeping mother she said: "I am very cold—but it is no matter—it will soon be over." Then she said to me: "I wish, Sir, when I am gone you would tell the children of the parish how good the Lord has been to me, a poor sinner. Tell them that they who seek Him early will find Him. Tell them that the ways of sin and ignorance are the ways to ruin and hell. And pray, tell them from me, Sir, that Christ is indeed the Way, the Truth, and the Life—He will in no wise cast out any that come."

"My dear child, you will soon be forever in His arms who is now guiding you by His rod and staff through the valley of the shadow of death." "I believe so, indeed I do," said she,

the shadow of death." "I believe so, indeed, I do," said she, "I long to be with Him—Jesus, help me through this last trial."

She then gave one hand to her father, the other to her mother, and said: "God bless you, God bless you—seek the Lord—you cannot know what I have felt for both of you. Lord, pardon and save my dear father and mother." She then took hold of her brother's hand, saying, "Thomas, I beg you to leave off your bad ways. Read the Bible—I give you mine. May the Lord turn your heart to love and follow Him." To the other woman she said, "I thank you, Mrs. K—, for all your kindness since I have been ill. I hope the Lord will remember you for it, according to His rich mercy." "Ah, my child," said the woman, "I wish I was as fit to die as you are, but I fear that will never be—my sins have been many, very many." "Christ's blood cleanseth from all sin," said the child.

She turned to me with a look of surprising earnestness and animation, saying: "You, Sir, have been my best friend on earth. You have taught me the way to heaven and I love and thank you for it. You have spoken to me of the love of Christ and He has made me to feel it in my heart. I shall see Him face to face. He will never leave me nor forsake me. He is the same and changes not. Dear Sir, God bless you."

The child suddenly rose up with an unexpected exertion, threw her livid, wasted arms around me as I sat on the bedside, laid her head on my shoulder and said distinctly: "God bless and reward you. Give thanks for me to Him. My soul is saved. Christ is everything to me. Sir, we shall meet in heaven, shall we not?" "Oh yes, yes—then all will be peace. . . peace . . . peace."

She sank back on the bed, and spoke no more—fetched a deep sigh—smiled—and died.

The angels who rejoiced over her when her soul first turned to God have now carried her triumphantly to the heavenly hills and have already taught her to join "in holy song, their own immortal strains."

—Sel.

December 9, 1984

A LESSON ON IMPORTUNITY AND HUMILITY

Luke 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 And the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

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

1 Pet. 5:6.

Central Thought: We should never cease praying and entreating the Lord for the needs and burdens of our lives, and we must humble ourselves before God, confessing our needs and begging Him for mercy.

Word Definitions: *Avenge:* Make right, deliver, recompense. *Abased:* Brought down.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have two stories in our lesson today that give us two indispensable statutes of the life of Christ: prayer and humility. They both go hand in hand. In the first, Jesus uses an extreme case to show the operation and effect of prayer. Fervent prayer is based upon the sense of desperate need. The purpose of this parable was to show us to continue praying and never stop praying. The hard, unjust judge who stubbornly resisted the widow's entreaties was finally moved to gratify her desire, but it was not because of any concern or interest in her on his part. It was simply a move to exclude her from his court room. He was getting tired of seeing her there every day. This is to show us the necessity of pressing our case before God. God is not going to be like that unjust judge. The very fact that Jesus said that God bears long with His elect shows us that there will be at times a delay to the fulfillment of our prayers, but the delay should not stop or discourage us. Let us keep praying and holding on. The other parable illustrates the attitude that we must have toward God and toward our fellow man. We must have an attitude of humility and self-abasement. The proud, self-sufficient, and self-justifying Pharisee got nowhere with God. He probably enjoyed praying about how good he thought he was, but he forgot to confess his needs and ask for mercy. The poor publican had no good things to say about himself. He stood afar off and did not feel worthy to even look up to heaven, but beat upon his breast in a most wretched manner. His broken heart and contrite spirit rang the bells of heaven. He went down to his house with a great load taken off of his soul. Oh, what a lesson this is to us!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the purpose of the first parable?
2. Is there much danger in us becoming weary of interceding before the Lord?
3. Why are there times when God has to bear long with His children?
4. Why did Jesus give the challenge about Him finding faith on the earth?
5. What was the purpose of the second parable?
6. What was wrong with the Pharisee?
7. What was his attitude toward himself and the good things he did?

8. What did the publican have?
9. Why did he go down to his house justified, rather than the Pharisee?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Here are the two stony hearts: the unjust judge and the proud Pharisee. Both of these men looked down on someone less in rank than they. Did you know that this is displeasing in the sight of God? We should never look down contemptuously on anyone. Were it not for the grace of God, we might be as they are. Their hard and unbroken hearts disqualified them from God's favor and blessing. Here are the two broken and contrite hearts: the widow and the publican. Oh, if we can just visualize the value of fervent prayer and deep humility before God! Through the influence and the avenue of the teachings of Christ we can avoid these pitfalls. We do not have to be proud and arrogant. We can humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and assume a faithful and determined mind to hold on to God regardless of the cost. The Lord wants us to pray and not to faint. It is easy to faint. It is easy to give up and not earnestly contend for the faith. If we make heaven our home, however, it will be because we have humbled ourselves before the Lord and held on to Him through all the trials and tests of life. God does bear with His children. That is, He does delay and withhold for a season many times the needs that we have and are praying for. In the Bible, we see where God bore long with His children. Israel suffered many things down in Egypt. Finally God sent Moses to be their leader. He let them suffer for a long time, and even after Moses came, they still suffered for a long time. He bears long with us today. Let us be determined to cleave to Him with trueness and purpose of heart. At any cost, let us be among that number who will be found in faith when Jesus comes again.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our lesson today begins by declaring that "man ought always to pray, and not to faint." It ends with, "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." These two statements sum up all the texts in between. To pray to God requires an abasement of ourselves. A proud man is unable to request something of another, especially repeatedly. Rejection is difficult to accept to the proud of heart.

Let us further analyze the condition of those who exalt themselves. Pride erects a barrier between itself and others. Pride loathes superiority. The proud man will attempt to bring others down to his level. Yet pride knows no level. No one shares a common plane with the proud individual. To venture further, we might say that pride scorns those who are inferiors. One of less position in life is not considered worthy of association with those who feel lifted up. Who, then, is left to bring cheer, comfort, and companionship to the proud? It is a hard life to live.

How much better it is to humble oneself before God, become a beggar before His storehouse of wealth, and enjoy the qualities of life that exalt the soul in thanksgiving and praise. Just as the saying, "the squeaking wheel gets the grease," so the humble in heart who pray without ceasing obtain the blessings.

—Wayne Murphey

December 16, 1984

SALVATION COMES TO THE CHIEF PUBLICAN

Luke 19:1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho,
2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Memory Verse: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1 Tim. 1:15.

Central Thought: Whosoever puts forth earnest and whole-hearted effort to see and to know Christ will be rewarded with the blessing of His great salvation.

Word Definition: *Publican:* A tax farmer, or collector of public revenue. Zacchaeus was the arch-tax collector. He was the leader or principal of the group.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus has come to Jericho, a city that was situated about 15 miles east and a little to the north of Jerusalem. As He and the multitude following Him approached the city of Jericho, they added to their number a blind man, whom Mark tells us was Bartimaeus, who was healed by Jesus after crying out to Him from the road side. All the people praised God with him upon beholding this wonderful miracle. They were, no doubt, worked up in their minds to a high pitch of excitement, which gave rise to word being passed on ahead of their coming. The tidings of Christ's entrance and passage through the city reached the ears of one Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of that area. There is something about the story of this "wee little man," as the children's song calls him, that has intrigued the hearts of humanity for centuries since. What was it that started the chain of events that developed into this inspiring account of salvation coming to this man? First, he had heard the report. Jesus of Nazareth was passing through Jericho! Who? The Galilean prophet? The One who has done all of these wonderful acts of mercy for the people? One can just imagine what thoughts raced through his mind. He was little of stature—a short man. He just could not see for the press, or the throngs that no doubt lined the street. "He sought to see Jesus, who he was." Oh, what content is in those words! How wonderful it would be if more people would have the same quest! He ran before, and got ahead of the crowd. He climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him. He put forth a real effort, and Jesus saw the yearning of his heart. Zacchaeus came down at Jesus' command, and "received him joyfully." Oh, there are so many wonderful thoughts in this lesson! Look for them! There would be more people singing the song of salvation if this man's example was followed.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What were the three main things about Zacchaeus that makes this story?
2. Why did he want to see Jesus, "who he was"?
3. Is it very important for us today to know who Jesus is?
4. What was there about Zacchaeus that appealed to the heart of Christ?
5. What restitution did he promise to make?
6. Is this the way we should do today?
7. What did Jesus say had come to this man's house?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Blessed is the man who hears about Jesus Christ and sets out to find out who He is and what it is all about! Sad the fate of the disinterested and indifferent! Of all of those who thronged the way that day, Jesus chose to go to the house of this little man. Jesus saw a special effort being put forth, and a special desire burning in that heart. He was undaunted by the press. He overcame every difficulty that lay in his path, so strong was the desire to see Jesus, who He was. Oh, that more people today would sit up and take notice at the message of Jesus Christ! Jesus knows everyone who is seeking after Him. He makes special moves to make contact with that one whose heart is reaching out for Him. Zacchaeus meant business. He had probably come face to face with the stark realization that wealth and carnal security do not satisfy the inner man. All of his riches shrank to nothingness before the loveliness of Christ. We do not hear any more about Zacchaeus, but it would be my hope for him that he cherished that day and ever after strove to follow the teachings of Jesus. I would hope that he followed through that noble and righteous resolve that he voiced there of giving to the poor and making restitution for all he had taken wrongfully. Zacchaeus was lost. He was a poor, wandering soul in sin. He was just the kind of man Jesus came seeking for. Although the people murmured at Jesus going home with Zacchaeus, it was the joy of the heart of Christ to accompany this man to his own home and share a little time with him as He journeyed on toward Jerusalem.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The outstanding quality of Zacchaeus was his great desire for Christ. That desire caused him to run down the road ahead

of the crowd and climb a tree so that when Christ approached, Zacchaeus was assured of seeing Him. His desire was partially satisfied when Christ singled him out and chose to accompany Him home. Then we find that desire toward Christ fully expressed as Zacchaeus declared his resolution to make abundant restitution. It is not recorded that Jesus initiated the conversation about restitution. True repentance will go all out to obtain salvation. Those who have this same desire have no difficulty finding Christ. Some half-heartedly desire to be saved and can't keep an experience, but when salvation really comes to their house, it's an experience that others will know about. Jesus left Zacchaeus' house, but the spirit of Christ stayed there to dwell.

A new pastor visited a parishioner one day. When the husband returned from work, the wife stated, "The new pastor called today."

"What did he say?" asked her husband.

"Oh," she answered, "He asked, 'Does Christ live here?' and I didn't know what to say."

The man's face flushed. "Why didn't you tell him that we were respectable people?" he said.

"Well," she answered, "I might have said that; only that isn't what he asked me."

"Then why," continued the man, "didn't you tell him that we say our prayers and read our Bible?"

The wife replied, "But he didn't ask me that, either!"

The man grew more vexed. "Why," he said again, "didn't you say that we always go to church?"

The poor woman broke down. "He didn't ask me that, either; he only asked, 'Does Christ live here?'"

What a blessing it is when we can clearly state that salvation has come to our house and that Jesus dwells within our heart.

—Wayne Murphey

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December 23, 1984

THE WONDERFUL BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

Matt. 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child by the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Memory Verse: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matt. 1:21.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem and heralded to be the Son of God, the Saviour of all people.

Word Definitions: *Espoused:* To be engaged or promised for marriage. *Privily:* Secretly. *Swaddling clothes:* Strips of cloth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Although there is but very little basis for December 25th being the actual date of the birth of Christ, as a general rule we turn our thoughts and sentiments about this time of year

to that blessed account of the advent of our Lord into human flesh. The prophet in Isa. 7:14, had foretold a son being born to a virgin. The writer in Heb. 10:5, quotes Psa. 40:6, as prophesying that "a body hast thou prepared me." Phil. 2:7, states that Christ took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. For all this to be fulfilled, some young woman had to be chosen who would be the vessel to conceive divine seed and bring forth a baby. Perhaps the story of Christ's birth is such a familiar thing to many of us that we do not take time to ponder its blessedness. As we view the recorded incidents that led up to this wonderful event, we are filled with wonder and praise. Was Mary a virgin? And was her firstborn Son all that the Scriptures proclaim Him to be? If He is, and if all of this is true, our souls should vibrate with joy and gladness. Yes, it is true. Let it be that at least one day in the year be devoted to the holy memory of that blessed event! We who know in our heart what it means can celebrate it every day! What though the blessed season be attended with so many vain traditions that the world has produced? We can still think about Christ Jesus and the holy value of His birth. Matthew's account and Luke's record go hand in hand. It all tells us the wonderful news that Jesus Christ was born that He might be in mortal's stead to save us all from sin and death.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was found out about Mary before she became the wife of Joseph?
2. What was Joseph minded to do about this?
3. Why did he change his mind?
4. What did the angel say that this child would do?
5. How had the prophet foretold this?
6. Why did God allow His Son to be born in such surroundings?
7. What kind of tidings did the angel bring to the shepherds that night?
8. Who else was this message meant for?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Just think of the sorrow and anguish that Joseph experienced in his heart when it was revealed to him that Mary, the woman who had promised to marry him, was with child. We do not know just how long he bore this pain in his heart. He, no doubt, pondered the situation seriously and perhaps tearfully

decided that he would have to break off the engagement. He did not want her defamed by the public eye, so he purposed to carry this out as secretly as he could. We have wondered if Mary had tried to explain it all to Joseph, telling him about the visit of the angel and what had been revealed to her. Perhaps he could not bring himself to believe her. At any rate he was minded to go ahead with the separation. "But while he thought on these things. . . ." It surely paid him not to be too hasty! He took some time to ponder and study this thing. I would like to think that he prayed to God about it. Then one night while he slept, he had a dream. The angel of the Lord spoke to him and swept all of his doubts and wonderings away. He knew what to do. Think of the joy that filled his heart, and the joy that Mary felt, too, when he told her about it. They were at last married. Think of the thoughts and emotions that filled Mary during those months. According to Luke's account, Mary spent the first three months with her cousin Elisabeth. The time finally came for the blessed Christ to be born, but He did not come into the finery of wealth and fashion. He emerged into the realm of mortals within the crude walls of a cattle shed. Upon a manger bed of hay He was laid, wrapped in strips of cloth which are the emblems of poverty. Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. (See 2 Cor. 8:9).

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The message that the angel delivered to Joseph and the message heralded to the shepherds were the greatest this world has ever received. They were concerning the birth of a great Deliverer. Man had been in bondage to Satan since Eve succumbed to the temptation that was presented to her. What a dreary 4000 years man had endured! Paul describes this bondage thus: "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." Rom. 7:19. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom 7:24, 25. Sometimes I think that we really fail to fully appreciate this great Deliverer as we should.

Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. He gave His all for us. His was a total and perfect commitment. He did not shirk from that which would bring deliverance to a sin-suffering people.

Isn't it wonderful to realize that these "good tidings of great joy" transcend all time, distance, and nationality, and

reach to us today? What a wonderful message those shepherds received!

—Wayne Murphey

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December 30, 1984

WISE MEN WORSHIP THE NEW-BORN KING

Matt. 2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod¹ the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem.

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Memory Verse: And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Matt. 2:6.

Central Thought: The news of the birth of Jesus Christ was communicated to certain honored and respected men who lived to the east of Israel through the means of a special shining star in the heavens. These men welcomed the glad tidings and came on the long overland journey to pay homage and worship to the King of the Jews.

Word Definitions: *Frankincense:* A gum or resin extracted from certain trees, beaten into a whitish powder which releases a white cloud and sweet fragrant smell when burned. It is typical of the sweet incense of faith, love, and holiness that ascends from the heart and life of a child of God. *Myrrh:* Another kind of gum resin. It seems to have been used for medicine and preservation properties. A hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes were used in the burial of Christ's body. John 19:39.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is evident, according to Luke's account, that on the eighth day after the birth of Christ, Mary and Joseph took Him to Jerusalem to be presented to the Lord and to make the designated sacrifice. To unite the two accounts (the one of Luke and that of Matthew), we must assume that Mary and Joseph returned to Bethlehem to tarry for a season. A little space of time surely must have elapsed and Mary and Joseph had moved into a house, where they were staying when the wise men from the east made their visit. Now these wise men were probably Jews who were living in Arabia. They were probably like many of the Jews looking forward to the advent of the Messiah. God saw fit to send them a sign of Christ's coming. This star was not a normal star in the heavens. It was a special light that traveled, guiding the wise men on their way. It was not a group of stars come together, nor was it Mars or Venus. It was a special, divine working of the Almighty God. When these men had seen the star, they were somehow persuaded that it was the omen of the new-born King of the Jews. It could have been that the star was made manifest, and they took their journey toward Jerusalem where they supposed that the Christ would be housed. It is doubtful that the star itself guided them to Jerusalem. After they had been given directions concerning Bethlehem, to their great joy they found the star going before them. The star was so specifically manifest that it came and stood over where the Christ child was.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did these wise men know that a King had been born?
2. What did they want to do?
3. Why did Herod seem anxious to know about the King?
4. How did they know where the Christ should be born?
5. What did the wise men do when they saw the star going before them?
6. What caused them to fall down and worship the Child when they came to Him?
7. What should we do in homage to the King of kings today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God must surely have honored and favored these wise men for their faith and piety, and for their response to His divine revelation to them. As God worked, they responded, and He worked for them again. This is much the way that God deals with us. God deals with a lost soul, and if that person responds and begins to seek the Christ and the way of salvation, God will faithfully assist that person on his quest. The wise men assumed that Christ would be at Jerusalem. People today assume that salvation and the grace of God can be found in some church or recognized religion. In this they are disappointed, but if they are really seeking the truth, they will not be daunted. It should be the desire of every soul to find and to know what the real truth is. There is a beautiful expression of prayer in Psalms 43:3, that says: "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." Oh, if this were the real, deep, heart-felt aspirations of souls today, there would be more people finding the real truth. If they get a little misled, yet by continuing to seek, they will be guided and helped by the Lord. Poor Herod! History tells us that he died not long after this. He could not stand thinking about another king! Think of the hatred, selfishness, and murder in his heart to have all those babies killed! No doubt there were numbers of homes and mothers wrecked with fear and sorrow that day.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

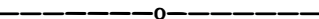
The wise men whom history records as astrologers, had great devotion for God as was manifested by their earnest endeavor to find and worship the Christ child. They traveled from one of the eastern countries to Jerusalem to make

inquiry, and then traversed the six miles on to Bethlehem, unequipped with the convenient mode of travel available to us today. Their devotion is also portrayed in the value of their gifts which were appropriate for a king. Do you think when they fulfilled their mission that they felt dissatisfied or cheated? I believe that one glimpse of the Christ repayed all their effort.

Our worship to God today requires the same diligence. There should be no limit to what we will do in order to honor God. We should give our gifts to Him. The gift of frankincense has often been referred to as a praise and devotion offering. Myrrh is a bitter-tasting incense. God not only accepts our praise, but He takes upon Himself the bitter things that we face in life. To Him belongs our gold—our hearts. As God accepts these sacrifices, we will feel fulfilled and satisfied.

Our worship to God should be just as real to us as it was to the wise men. They beheld the Christ child in the flesh and paid Him an earthly tribute. We worship God in the Spirit. We see Him with spiritual eyes and adore Him from the heart; yet it is just as meaningful as the experience of the wise men.

—Wayne Murphey



OVER THE CROSSING



“Oh, please, sir, take me over the crossing,” said a little faint voice, as I was leisurely taking my morning walk.

The strange request roused me from my reverie; and looking imploringly in my face stood a thinly-clad, shivering little girl, who carried a small bundle, which she held in her hand with a singular tenacity. I gave a searching look into the child's face, while she imploringly repeated:—

“Will you take me over the crossing quick, I'm in such a hurry.”

Tossing her in my arms I bounded over the muddy path-way; and just as I set down my little charge, the bundle slipped from her grasp, or rather its contents, leaving the empty paper in her hands, and an embroidered vest on the sidewalk. I picked up the vest, and in doing so unrolled the same, when lining, sewing-silk and padding were all disengaged, so that the nimble fingers of the poor child picked up, and brushed, and packed them together again with scrupulous care; and tying them firmly, she gave me a sweet smile

and bounded along. She would soon have passed from my sight had I not again called after her, and interrogated her why she made such haste.

"Oh, sir," she replied, "because my mother must have expected me an hour ago. I have been waiting for the young gentleman at the tailor's to decide which color he preferred, and then the tailor told me to stop while he cut it, and then he gave me such a beautiful pattern for my mother to embroider by it—but it is a sight of work to do it, sir, and I'm afraid she will set up all the long nights to sew, while I am sleeping, for the man said he must have it completed by next Thursday; the young gentleman is to be married then, and will want it—and if it isn't done, maybe he would never give Mother another stitch of work, and then what would become of us?"

And as the child hurried on I caught the same hurried footsteps, and followed on until we came to another crossing, when again came the beseeching tone:—

"Will you take me over this crossing, too, sir?"

It was done in a moment, and my interest in the child increased as her prattle continued:—

"Mamma is to have a dollar for this work, and she means to buy me a new frock with part of the money, and then we shall have a great loaf of bread and a cup of milk, and Mother will find time to eat with me—if there is any money left, I shall have a little open-work straw bonnet, and go to Sunday School with Susy Niles."

And her little feet scarcely touched the walk, so light and fairy-like was her tread.

"And does your mother work for one man all the time, little girl?" I inquired.

"Oh, no, sir; it is only now and then she gets such a nice job. Most of the time she has to sew for shops where she earns about twenty-five cents a day, and then she has hardly enough to pay her rent, and it isn't all the time we get enough to eat—but then Mother always gives me the big slice when there is one big and one little one; sometimes she cries and don't eat hers at all."

A coach was passing—the child looked toward it and remarked:—

"I know the lady in that pretty carriage; she is the very one that is going to marry the young gentleman who is to wear this embroidered vest. She came to my home yesterday to get my mother to spangle the wreath around her white satin dress; and it's just the same pattern that is to be put on this

vest; but she could not do it, 'cause her eyesight is so poor, and the spangles shined so."

My tongue was silent. Could it be that these were to be the very articles that were to be worn at my Ellen's wedding? For did I not pay for spangles yesterday, and what was it that vexed Ellen but because she could not find anybody to sew them on when she returned? She said Mrs. Taggard was almost blind.

"My little girl," said I, "is your name Taggard?"

"Yes, sir—'Gusta Taggard, and we live down in Sullivan Court. Are you going home with me?"

It was a sensible conjecture; for why else should I follow on?

"I am going to see you safely at the door, and to help you over all the crossings."

"There's only one more, sir, and here it is; we live down there at No. 3, on the third floor back."

The child looked kindly, and as she sweetly bade me, "Good by, sir," I thrust my hand in my pocket and drew from it all the change it contained, which was a bright fifty cent piece, and placed it in her little palm. 'Gusta Taggard gave me her heartfelt thanks, and was soon out of my sight.

An hour before, I had started from my home an invalid. I had long deliberated whether an exposure to a chilly east wind would not injure rather than improve me. I was melancholy, too; my only daughter was about to be married—there was confusion all over the house—the event was to be celebrated in fashionable style. Ellen's dress had cost what would have been a fortune to this poor seamstress, and I moralized. But I had forgotten myself; the cough which had troubled me was no longer oppressive. I breathed quite freely, and yet I had walked more briskly than I had done for months, without so much fatigue as slow motion caused, so that when I returned, my wife rallied me upon looking ten years younger than when I left her in the morning; and when I told her the specific lay in my walk with a little prattler, and the satisfaction of having left her happier than I found her, she took the occasion to press the purchase of a diamond brooch for Ellen, affirming if the gift of half a dollar made me so much happier, and that, too, to a little errand street girl, what would fifty times that amount confer upon one's only daughter, upon the eve before her marriage?

I gave the diamond brooch—I paid the most extravagant bills to upholster's, dry goods establishments, confectioners

and musicians, with which to enliven the great occasion, and yet I found more real satisfaction in providing for the real wants of little 'Gusta Taggard and her mother than in all the splendid outlay of the wedding ceremony; and it was not that it cost less which made the satisfaction, but it was that all extravagant outlays, in the very nature of things, are unsatisfactory, while ministering to the necessities of the truly needy and industrious confers its own reward.

I had seen the glittering spangled dress—but it was made ready by some poor, emaciated sufferer, who toiled on in patient trust, and the embroidered vest was finished by the strained vision and aching head of another, who was emphatically one of "God's poor," upon whom blight or disgrace had not fallen, save by His appointment; and the diamond brooch was borne off by admiring throngs but to be envied and coveted, while the simple coin bestowed upon my little street acquaintance had introduced me to a new species of enjoyment that never cloy in the retrospective. I had learned to do good in small ways—my morning walks have now an object and aim. I pass by the splendid palaces to hasten to Sullivan Court, and thence on to yet other sources of enjoyment, so that my invalidism is fast leaving me by the new direction which is given to my thoughts.

I am free to acknowledge that while I pay for flannel robes, and silverware, and servants, and all the requirement which fashion imposes, I derive far less pleasure from surveying them, than in sitting beside some worthy recipient of charity, who tells me that "the little sum you gave me saved me from despair and self-destruction, and enabled me to become helpful, so that no other assistance is now necessary." Such a confession fills a void which administering to a luxury never can; and all the satisfaction originated in first helping a little child over the crossing. —Selected

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STOP AND LOOK AROUND!

Life is full of passing pleasures
That are never seen or heard,
Little things that go unheeded—
Blooming flower and song of bird;
Overhead, a sky of beauty;
Underneath, a changing ground;
And we'd be the better for it
If we'd stop and look around!

Oh, there's much of toil and worry
In the duties we must meet;
But we've time to see the beauty
That lies underneath our feet.
We can tune our ears to listen
To a joyous burst of sound,
And we know that God intended
We should stop and look around!

Drop the care a while, and listen
When the sparrow sings his best;
Turn aside, and watch the building
Of some little wayside nest;
See the wild flower ope its petals,
Gather moss from stump and mound;
And you'll be the better for it
If you stop and look around!

—Selected

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