

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

LUKE LESSON 3 (Chapters 12-18)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Lk. 12:1). I’m Timothy Sparks.

Ben Bailey:

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As we begin our study, we see that Jesus is upset with the Pharisees. But why?

Timothy Sparks:

We learn from the previous chapter (11) that Jesus had called the Pharisees “hypocrites.” In fact, in that one chapter alone, Jesus uses the word “woe” six times in addressing them (Matthew 23 lists seven woes pronounced upon the Pharisees as hypocrites). It has been suggested that if there was a sin that Jesus might have considered as His “pet peeve,” it would have been hypocrisy. Jesus came down hard on the Pharisees, and even went so far as to warn His disciples to “beware the leaven [hypocrisy] of the Pharisees.” But what do we mean when we refer to someone as being a hypocrite?

Ben Bailey:

The word “hypocrite” carries with it the meaning of someone who “acts a part” or “plays a role.” As in the case of an actor on a stage, it looks real, but it’s not at all sincere. In Matthew 23, Jesus referred to the Pharisees as being like “whitewashed tombs”—pretty on the outside, but on the inside, full of dead men’s bones. Hypocrites in the church are those people who claim to be a Christian, but the way they live screams, “No way!” People who claim to be Christians, yet who use filthy and inappropriate language like those people in the world, or who dress immodestly like those people in the world, or who try to be like the world in practically every way, have become hypocritical in their actions. Jesus makes it

clear that you cannot have **both** the world **and** Christ. As Christ said in Mathew 6:24ff., you cannot serve both God and mammon (riches). As we think about Jesus' teachings in Luke 12, we need to ask ourselves if **we** are really living the Christian life. If people examined our lives, would they see a good example, or would they see someone who **says** one thing, but **does** another? Few things harm the cause of Christ more than people who claim to be Christians, but actually are hypocrites. Jesus came down on hypocrisy so hard because it represented the opposite of everything for which He lived and died.

Timothy Sparks:

In Luke 12, Jesus also addresses the issue of covetousness (greed). In verse 15, He says: "Take heed. and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Jesus is telling us that we should not become enamored with the things that we accumulate in this life, because whatever we might possess pales in comparison to a home in Heaven with God throughout all of eternity. We may have many earthly goods temporarily, but we must not be consumed by those things. In Luke 12, Jesus provides a graphic illustration intended to drive home His point.

Ben Bailey:

Jesus told the story of a man whose ground had yielded much. We might say he had a good wheat harvest that particular year. The man decided to tear down his barns and build bigger barns. Then he said to himself, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry" (vs. 19). The fellow has new barns that are filled to the brim, so he thinks that he can now "live the good life." But God said to the man, "Fool, this night shall your life be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (vs. 20). Jesus then said: "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (vs. 21). The "things" we accumulate in this life will never satisfy us, and will never get us to Heaven. We should not trust in such physical things. Years ago, on what was called "Black Monday," people who had trusted in the stock market discovered this painful truth. Money can't save you! Too many times, people put their trust in the almighty dollar instead of Almighty God! Paul told Timothy: "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). Unlike the rich fool whom Jesus discussed, we should not trust in the things we accumulate, but we should instead "trust in the Lord with all [our] heart, and lean not on [our] own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

Timothy Sparks:

Jesus addresses this, and tells us that those who do trust in early goods exhibit a lack of faith due to constant worry. Christ said:

"Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you" (Lk. 12:23-31).

Think about this. How many people have you seen on the side of the road, holding signs that say: “Will work for food!” How many birds have you seen with similar signs? Birds don’t do that—because they are busy doing what they are supposed to be doing. This is Jesus’ point—as expressed in Luke 12 and Matthew 6. If we will “seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness,” then all the things we need—food, clothing, shelter—will be given to us by God. We shouldn’t worry. If we do, it is indicative of the fact that we don’t have enough faith in God to take care of us. If we do **our** part by doing what God has commanded us to do, then He will do **His** part, and we will lack for nothing.

In Luke 13, Jesus deals with repentance. But He also makes it clear that when bad things happen to people, it doesn’t necessarily indicate that it’s because they are the worst of all sinners.

Ben Bailey:

Jesus wants us to know that the only cure for materialism, worldliness, and lack of faith is repentance. Consider Luke 13:1-5.

“There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.’”

Think about someone today who is driving a car down the road. The tie-rod breaks, and the car veers off the road, crashes, and kills the occupant. Someone might say, “Well, that guy was a bad person, and God did that to him.” Jesus’ answer to that kind of thinking is: “No. But unless **you** repent, you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3,5). What’s the point? The point is this. All people must be willing to repent—to change their hearts and their actions—and turn back to God. Whether it is a lack faith, or materialism, or worldliness, or ungodly living—all people must repent if they are going to be right before God. From Acts 3:19 we learn that we must “repent and turn again, that our sins might be blotted out.” We see a good example of this in 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10, where it says that the people turned from worshiping idols to serve God. We shouldn’t worry about whether or not the things we see happening around us are acts of God. Rather, we should be concerned with our own repentance and how we fare before God.

Timothy Sparks:

In Acts 17:30, we read: “These times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” We must repent. We must change our ways **and** change our way of thinking, in order to conform our hearts and our actions to God’s Word. In Luke 13:24, Jesus goes on to say: “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” Christ is stressing that while we have time and opportunity, we need to “go the narrow way.” Some will wait until it’s too late—only to find that the door is shut. Eternity will be here, and there will be no second chances. The Lord will say to the wicked: “Depart from me, you workers of iniquity.” We learn from Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Jesus said: “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46). Why do people call on the name of the Lord, but refuse to obey Him? If we are to enter in through “the narrow way,”

then we must not only call on Christ's name, but obey Him as well. Some, of course, suggest that all a person has to do to be saved is to "accept Jesus into their heart." But this is not what the New Testament teaches.

Ben Bailey:

From Acts 2:21, we learn that those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. The real question, however, is this: What does it mean to "call on the name of the Lord"? The answer is provided in an example found in Acts 22:16 where Paul recounts his own conversion. Ananias comes to Paul (who at that time was still called Saul), to tell him what to do to be saved. Ananias says: "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." How does a person "call on the name of the Lord?" A person calls on the name of the Lord by obeying the will of God. We, as humans, are in what has been called "the sin predicament." We have a problem with sin that we, by ourselves, cannot solve. Thus, we cry out to God, "Help us!" When God responds by setting forth a plan that can save us, and we "call on the name of the Lord," we do so by doing whatever God told us to do to be saved. It's not just that we cry out "Lord, Lord!" and are saved. It's when we call on God's name and then act according to His divine commands that we are saved.

In Luke 14:1-5, we find some people who were always trying to "catch" Jesus at saying something wrong. The text records:

"Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?'"

The text goes on to say that they could not answer Christ (vs. 6). These people wanted the praise of men. They wanted to be exalted, but Christ humbled them.

Timothy Sparks:

Jesus taught: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Mt. 23:12). We must do the lowering before God can do the raising. If **we** try to do the raising, then **God** will do the lowering. Peter said: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6). James said: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (Jas. 4:10).

In Luke 14, we learn of a feast [supper] that was prepared, and about the numerous excuses that people began to offer for not being able to attend.

Ben Bailey:

We read in Luke 14:18: "They all with one accord began to make excuses." They were horrible excuses, too. Listen to them.

"The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'"

Who buys a piece of land without looking at it first? This was a **supper**. Who takes oxen out to “test” them at night? And how many newlyweds do you know who would pass up a free meal? Jesus’ point, of course, was these pitiful excuses were simply that—excuses. These people did not **want** to do the will of God. Thus, they offered excuses. We seem to have some of these types of folks in the church today. They’ve got every kind of chore under the Sun that can be done only on Sunday, while on every other day of the week they have got more time on their hands than you can imagine. We must stop making excuses, and start doing the will of God! Why do we make excuses? Isn’t it because excuses release us from the obligation of having to deal with our responsibilities? The truth of the matter, however, is that while excuses may “seem” to get us out of legitimate responsibilities today, there is going to come a time when we all have to stand before the throne of God and give an account of what we have done in this life. At that time, there will be no more excuses. If we will simply do God’s will, that’s so much simpler, and so much better, than trying to make excuses.

Timothy Sparks:

In Luke 14:27-33, Jesus addresses the topic of “counting the cost.”

“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

Throughout this discussion, Jesus is making two points. First, we must count the cost of being His disciple. Second, we must be willing to bear our cross in order to be a disciple. Jesus wants people to consider the sacrifices they will have to make as Christians. He does not want them to take Christianity lightly. This is the point Peter was making when he wrote:

“If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’” (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

When we get to Luke 15, some had accused Jesus of eating with sinners. So, the Lord tells three stories about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and two lost boys.

Ben Bailey:

Jesus here points out the value of a soul. Did He eat with sinners? Of course He did! He came to reach sinners. Jesus tells the story of a woman who loses a coin. She sweeps her house from top to bottom, finds the coin, and rejoices greatly. Christ also tells the story about a lost sheep. A shepherd has 100 sheep, one of which is lost. He leaves the 99 and goes to look for the one that is lost. He finds the sheep, and rejoices. The Bible tells us that the same thing is true of a lost soul—when it returns to the fold, there is great rejoicing in Heaven. Then we have the story of the prodigal son and his lost brother. The prodigal son received his inheritance early, went into a far country, and squandered it on wasteful

living. He ended up in a pig pen, wishing that he could have it as good as the hogs do. We read in Luke 15:17 that he came to his senses. In Luke 15:20, we see that then, and only then, did he return to his father. Only when we come to our senses, and really understand the sin problem we have, will we be able to come to our heavenly Father. In the story Jesus told, the father sees his son returning, runs out to meet him, and embraces him. The father **wanted** his son to come home! Then we learn about the reaction of this young man's older brother. The father threw a big homecoming party for his prodigal son. He killed the fatted calf, and made a big "to do" over his son's return. The other son—who had remained at home—was angry. He said, "You never did anything like this for me. I've been here with you the whole time." The problem with the older brother was pride. Sometimes, we today can experience the same problem. When people who have sinned return to the church, we want to put them on a "lower level." We tend to think of them as "worse sinners." Jesus' point is clear: the value of a single soul is of critical importance to God—and it ought to be so to us, too! If there is rejoicing in Heaven at the return of a sinner, then there ought to be rejoicing on Earth as well. This story by Jesus teaches us an important lesson about reaching out to those who have gone astray, and about how we should welcome them back when they repent.

Timothy Sparks:

If Jesus had refused to eat with sinners, He would have eaten alone! We need to be people who are receptive to penitent sinners. We do not need to be like the prodigal son's older brother.

In Luke 16, we learn of a rich man who had great things in his life, and a beggar named Lazarus who sought only the crumbs from the rich man's table. When both of these men died and entered eternity, the situation was reversed. Lazarus found himself in Abraham's Bosom—a place of bliss. The rich man, however, is in a place of torment. The rich man begs Abraham to allow Lazarus to just touch the tip of his finger to some water and place it on the rich man's tongue. Abraham refuses, and instead reminds the rich man that he had good things during his lifetime, while now Lazarus has good things. The rich man then begged Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers (who were still alive on Earth) not to come where he is. But Abraham tells the rich man that his brothers have Moses and the prophets, and they should listen to them. Abraham suggested that if the man's brothers won't listen to Moses and the prophets, then sending someone back from the dead would not do any good either. Jesus' point in telling this story was that it is the Word of God that should guide us and teach us, and that will lead us to eternity.

Ben Bailey:

From Luke 17 and 18, we see two examples of the type of correct attitude that we ought to have before God. In Luke 17:1-17, we see the example of ten lepers who came to Jesus, seeking to be healed. Jesus does heal them. He heals all ten of them, and they go their way. But one of them remembers what the Lord has done for him, and returns to thank Jesus. The Lord then asks the haunting question, "Where are the nine?" We need to be a thankful, grateful people. We should not be grumbly hateful, but humbly grateful! If we hope to enter into God's presence, then we must appreciate what He has done for us. There is a similar circumstance in Luke 18. We see two people praying. One is a Pharisee; the other is a tax collector. The Pharisee's attitude is: "God, let me tell you how thankful **You** ought to be for **me**! I pray. I fast. I give alms. And I'm not at all like the tax collector, the sinner, and the other immoral people around me." The tax collector, on the other hand,

wouldn't even approach the temple, but stood afar off, beating his breasts, and said, "God, be merciful unto me, a sinner." Jesus asked "Which of these two returned to his house justified?" The answer, of course, was obvious. It was the tax collector—a man who knew that he needed God, who knew that he was a sinner, and who understood that, in and of himself, he could not be righteous. If we are going to make it to Heaven, we must have this same type of humble attitude. This is what Jesus meant when he said that those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. We must have an attitude of gratitude and thankfulness if we expect to be pleasing to God.

Timothy Sparks:

As Jesus continued his discussion in Luke 18, He asked: "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (vs. 8). Jesus wanted to know if the people "to whom the faith was once for all delivered" (Jude 3) would still be here and be faithful? When Jesus returns, will He find **you** faithful and true? Can Jesus depend on you? We do not know when Jesus will return, but we **do** know that He **will** return. We need to be ready. Are you ready for the Lord's return? If not, there is something you can do to prepare yourself.

Have you obeyed the Gospel? Are you a child of God? If not, you can come to the Lord, believing in Him with all your heart, genuinely repenting of your sins as you change your mind, change your life, and conform your will to God's. Upon your belief and repentance, you then can confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. You can be immersed into Christ for the remission of your sins, that you might arise from the watery grave of immersion to walk in newness of life (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4). "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). If we are faithful unto death, Jesus will give us the crown of life (Rev. 2:10.).

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR LUKE LESSON 2 (CHAPTERS 12-18)

1. It has been suggested that one particular sin served as Jesus' "pet peeve." What was that sin?
2. In Luke 12, Jesus told of a story of a rich man who built bigger barns to hold his plentiful harvest. Yet God called the man a fool. Why?
3. In Luke 12:23-31, Jesus spoke about things from nature—birds, lilies of the field, etc.—and how God takes care of them. What the point Christ was making in this passage?
4. What is the meaning of the word "hypocrite"?
5. In Luke 13:1-5, Jesus told of eighteen men who died when the Tower of Siloam collapsed. Explain the context of Jesus remarks.
6. In Luke 13, Christ spoke of two different "ways." What are those two ways, and where do they lead?
7. Explain the meaning of Jesus' statement: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Mt. 7:21).
8. According to Acts 2:21, those who "call on the name of the Lord will be saved." What is involved in "calling on the name of the Lord"?
9. In Luke 14, Jesus told the story of a feast that had been prepared, and how people refused an invitation to attend by offering lame excuses. What is the point of the story?
10. In Luke 14, Jesus also referred to people who wanted to build towers or go to war. What was the lesson Jesus was teaching in this context?
11. In 2 Peter 2:20-22, the apostle Peter referred to people who had become like clean sows who returned to wallow in the mire, or dogs who returned to eat their own vomit. Who were these people?
12. Why did Jesus eat with sinners?
13. What was Christ's purpose in telling the story of the prodigal son?
14. In the story off the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man was told that no one could go to speak to his brothers because they had "Moses and the prophets." What does that mean?
15. Jesus healed ten lepers, but only one returned to thank Him. When Jesus asked the one who returned, "Where are the nine?," what was the point He was making?
16. How does the attitude of the older brother (in the story about the prodigal son) relate to the attitude we today should have toward penitent sinners?