

## 47. Example, pursuit and mindset

August 28, 2011

In our life journey, we can choose three directions:

1) **Starting to step out without knowing who to follow and wander around aimlessly** – going this way, heading that direction, not going anywhere, accomplishing nothing, and the worst of all not knowing what the purpose of one's life is for.

2) **Following the crowd which itself has no idea where they are going, and doing whatever he or she feels as they go** – within or without the legal ethical, and moral boundaries.

3) **After a person realizes the emptiness of one's life, that person sees the godly Example, and pursues it with a godly mindset.**

Right at the heel of the Triumphal Entry of Jesus, the people who were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, were talking about this man Jesus from Nazareth. "Could He be the one? Is He the Messiah whom we've been waiting for? When is He going to overthrow the Roman authority out of our nation?" Endless rumors were already spreading faster than anyone's imagination.

This morning we are going to find out what Jesus is going to say to them about that. It is not something they were hoping and expecting.

### A. THE GENTILE SEEKERS

*John 12:20-22 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. 21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."*

Following His entry to Jerusalem, our Lord Jesus cleansed the temple for the second time by throwing out the merchants and their belongings. Perhaps the Greek truth seekers heard what Jesus did in the temple and were encouraged by it, because the Jewish religious rulers were making the lives of the pilgrims just miserable by using these over-charging merchants and nit-picking rules and regulations.

I believe that these Greek were not curious visitors or one-time investigators, rather they were God-fearing Gentiles who attended the Jewish Feasts to find the truth. We need to commend these Greek people for wanting to see Jesus, rather than wanting to seek miracles like the Jews. It is so much more important to know the Miracle Maker Jesus than miracles themselves even though they are wonderful.

These Greeks came to Philip. Why? There can be many speculations regarding the reason. We don't know, but one thing we do know is that the name Philip is a Greek name. The father of Alexander the Great was Philip of Macedon. It was a very prominent Greek name. By the way, Philip means "Horse Lover". Maybe these Greeks somehow connected with Philip and found out that he was one of Jesus' disciples.

This event of the Greek seekers was recorded only in the Gospel of John, nowhere else.

One of John's major themes is that Jesus is the Savior of the world, not simply the Redeemer of Israel. After all, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

## **B. ANDREW WHO ALWAYS BROUGHT PEOPLE TO JESUS**

*John 12:22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.*

Whenever we meet Andrew who was the younger brother of Peter, in the Bible, we see him always bringing people to Jesus. He brought his brother Peter to Jesus; he also brought a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish to the Lord.

We don't see any powerful speeches or profound comments by Andrew in the pages of the Bible. But he always had time to introduce people to Jesus. I wouldn't be one bit surprised if his favorite phrase was "Come and see."

Some Christians think that they cannot evangelize to unbelievers because they are lacking in biblical knowledge or courage, even though I would disagree with that. Because you will be surprised how much you know and remember once you open yourself up to the leading of the Holy Spirit when He brings an opportunity to introduce Jesus to them.

But if this is your case, I ask you to do what Andrew did. Tell them, "Come and see," and bring them to the church. Let them come and see Jesus through the Word of God during the service.

## **C. THE HOUR HAS COME**

*John 12:23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*

Throughout the studies in the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, how many times did Jesus repeatedly say, "My time has not come"? I am sure that His disciples looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders as if to say "Again."

Now for the first time, Jesus declared, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified." Any Jews would remember the prophecy that was written in Daniel 7:13-14:

*Daniel 7:13-14 "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.*

They must have said, "My, my, my! It is finally here. He is the Messiah whom the prophet Daniel talked about. He is going to overthrow the Roman authority and conquer the whole world."

Jesus didn't mean that He would be glorified in the eyes of men. That just happened at the triumphal entry. The glorification Jesus pointed to here was being glorified on the cross. Something the world could only see as disgraceful humiliation, Jesus saw as being glorified.

Everybody around Jesus was waiting for next words from His lips – how to conquer Rome. But that is not what they are going to hear.

## **D. THE EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW**

*John 12:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.*

When Jesus said this sentence, I am sure that the crowd's hearts skipped several beats and their stomach sank. He just fulfilled the prophecies from the Books of Zachariah 9 and Daniel 9; and they were expecting their Messiah to go out on His conquest, not talking about His death. That was NOT what they wanted to hear. He turned their dreams of conquest into nightmare of a cross. Jesus knew what they didn't: A political and military revolution wouldn't have done anybody any good. Politics and military power do not keep anybody out of hell.

Because of our own sinful nature within us, we are bound to do wrong things no matter what. The majority of educators and psychologists of the world claim that people are good in nature. Contrary to their belief, we didn't have to be taught to do wrong, it is in our DNA. No matter what your opinion of yourself, the Bible tells us plain and simple.

*Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*

We need a godly and right example to follow. And who is better for us to follow than Jesus Christ who is God Himself? Jesus is giving us the principle of His death and resurrection.

Just as a seed will never become a plant unless it "dies" and is "buried" so the death and burial of Jesus is necessary to His glorification. Before there can be resurrection power and fruitfulness, there must be death.

### **E. THE PURSUIT AND MINDSET**

*John 12:25-26 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*

If reverend Oprah Winfrey reads these two verses, she would say, "The Christian God is so insecure and egocentric that He demands everyone to give up their lives to serve Him." What is the Greek word for that? If we don't do what the Lord tells us to do, our life would be empty and purposeless. Look at the people with all the money and power. They are empty inside even though they are loaded outside.

The only way to have a fruitful life in this world is to follow Jesus Christ in death, burial, and resurrection with unselfish heart. In other words, Jesus is challenging us today to surrender our lives to Him.

This portion of the Scriptures reminds me three cross references in the NT:

*Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."*

*Mark 8:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."*

*Luke 9:23 Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."*

Do you think that this "denying oneself, taking up one's cross, and following Jesus" is kinda important to the Lord? No kidding! He repeated it in all four Gospels. Why? It is because we don't do what the Lord tells us to do.

We can have the finest example in front of our face and staring at us, but if we don't have the desire to pursue with the right mindset, the example doesn't do any good for us.

It is one thing for us to claim that we love God, it is a completely different thing to obey what He tells us to do from the Bible. Everyone in Christianity would love God, because He is absolutely loveable. But obeying His commands from the Bible go against the grain of our sinful and selfish nature, thus we often disobey Him.

Here are two common and major disobediences of many Christians against the Lord:

**1) Many believers say that they don't have time to serve the Lord and do His work.**

I don't think that that is the true reason why they don't serve, rather they don't want to. It means that serving God and His kingdom ain't their first priority.

**2) Many believers insist that they cannot afford to tithe to the church.**

They even come up with their own theological reasons why they don't tithe:

- There is no NT verse that commands us to tithe.
- We are living in the age of Grace, not Law.
- Everything we have belongs to the Lord, so tithing is so yesterday.

For these theological statements, I have a question for them if they are standing in front of me:

"If I show you, from the NT, especially from the Gospel with Jesus' own words, would you tithe?" By now, they may not be so confident or comfortable.

*Luke 11:42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. KJV*

*Luke 11:42 But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. NKJV*

*Luke 11:42 What sorrow awaits you Pharisees! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. NLT*

*Luke 11:42 Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. NIV*

*Luke 11:42 But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. NASB*

Jesus or the apostles never, ever commanded us to stop tithing in the NT. You don't find it anywhere.

As I have said this before, God doesn't need people's money to run His universe or His church. We need to have our trust in Him. Tithing is merely a channel for us to show ourselves that we really trust His promise to meet our needs.

Then, some will say, "I tithe." But in reality, they give \$20 one time, \$10 next time. Tithing means giving 10% of total income – Net or Gross is up to you. I'd prefer to do with my gross income, because when the Lord gives me blessings according to what I give, I want His gross blessings, not net.

Did you ever think that one of the most dangerous places you can be is right in church? Attending church can be hazardous to your spiritual health if you are coming for the wrong reason.

Why is it hazardous? Because you are exposed to truth. If you have no intention of putting that truth of God from the Bible into practice into your life, your church can actually be one of the worst places to be. It's a dangerous thing to hear the Gospel and the rest of God's truth from the Bible without any intention of applying it in your life.

When I signed up to follow Jesus almost 25 years ago, I didn't sign up to do what other people were doing. I signed up to be His follower, no matter what. He will stand by you as you follow Him, and God will honor you. That is God's promise for you.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) The greatest example for Christians to follow is Jesus Christ.
- 2) We can have Jesus as the example to follow, but if we actually don't do what He tells us to do, we are not going to see any of our spiritual growth in Him.
- 3) Our obedient mindset for Jesus only comes from our love for Him and His Word.