

THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES – THE RICH FOOL

BIBLE TEXT : Luke 12:1-34

LESSON 44 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Luke 12: 1-34

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 housetops.

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Hypocrisy and Pretence of the Pharisees

1. Jesus warns His disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy, Luke 12:1;
Matthew 23:27
²⁷ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.
2. He tells that all sin that is hidden shall be uncovered, Luke 12:2, 3;
Proverbs 28:13
¹³ He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.
3. Fear not man, but Him Who can cast both soul and body into hell, Luke 12:4, 5;
Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14
¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.
¹⁴ For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

II God's Watchful Care over His Own

1. He Who notes the sparrow's fall forgets not His own, Luke 12:6, 7;
Psalms 91:1, 2
¹ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
² I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.
2. If we confess or deny Christ before men, He will confess or deny us before God, Luke 12:8, 9;
I John 2:23
²³ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.
4. Sins against Christ can be forgiven, but not the sin against the Holy Ghost, Luke 12:10;
Mark 3:28, 29
²⁸ Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:
²⁹ But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:
5. Christ's witnesses before magistrates are taught of the Holy Ghost what to say, Luke 12:11,12;
John 16:13
¹³ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

III The Man Who Sought a Division of His Inheritance

1. He asked the Lord to have his brother divide the inheritance, Luke 12: 13,
Matthew 6:33
³³ But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
2. Jesus refused to be a judge or a divider over him, Luke 12: 14;

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.

¹³ And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

¹⁴ And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

¹⁵ And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

¹⁶ And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

¹⁸ And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

²⁰ But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

²¹ So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

²² And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

²³ The life is more than meat, and

John 18:36

³⁶ Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

2. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," Luke 12:15;

Matthew 6:31, 32

³¹ Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

³² (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

IV The Rich Man's Unprofitable Plans

1. Jesus gives the parable of the rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully, Luke 12:16;

Deuteronomy 6:10-12

¹⁰ And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

¹¹ And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

¹² Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

2. The rich man plans to tear down and build greater, Luke 12:17, 18;

James 4:13-15

¹³ Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

¹⁴ Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

¹⁵ For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

3. He communes with his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," Luke 12:19;

I Timothy 6:17

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

4. God speaks: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke 12:20, 21;

Ezekiel 18:4

⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

V Jesus' Warning against Covetousness

1. He warns His disciples to take no thought of the necessities of this present life, Luke 12:22, 23;

Colossians 3:1, 2

¹ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

2. He draws a lesson from the ravens and the lilies of the field, Luke 12:24-28;

Psalms 145:15, 16

¹⁵ The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

¹⁶ Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

Psalms 34:7-10

⁷ The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

the body *is more* than raiment.

²⁴ Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

²⁵ And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

²⁶ If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

²⁷ Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

²⁸ If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

²⁹ And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

³⁰ For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

³¹ But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³² Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

³³ Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

⁸ O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

⁹ O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

¹⁰ The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

3. His disciples are not to seek the things of the world as the Gentiles do, Luke 12:29-31.

4. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke 12:32-34.

NOTES:

The passages of Scripture from which this lesson is drawn are somewhat after the order of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and are filled with sound advice to His disciples: warning them against the prevalent, pharisaical evils, under the name of religion, which existed in His day and still exist today; reminding them of God's watchful care over His own, and the necessity of fearing Him and not man. He reiterated the truth in the Sermon on the Mount, to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and counselling us, as His disciples, to so order our lives that we may not get caught in the whirlpool of destruction, like the rich fool who set his heart upon the things of this present life. If we follow our Lord's instructions we shall be kept free from the turmoil, strife, and contention in which the world today is sunk.

The "leaven" spoken of in the Bible is a substance, which by a fermenting process is used to raise bread. And because of its fermenting nature it is a type in Scripture of sin and evil. In the observance of the Feast of the Passover the Children of Israel were required to put away all leavened bread and for seven days to eat only unleavened bread. "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters" (Exodus 13:7). And this was a type of putting away all sin.

Leaven has a rapid, corruptive power that makes it very typical of sin and evil. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." And Jesus employed it as a type of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Hypocrisy is the sin of pretending to be what we are not; and it, like leaven, had permeated all the religion of the Pharisees. And because of its contagious nature it might very easily infect others. That is why Jesus warned His disciples against the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," a sin which God hates. And we need today to see that we do not become infected with it, for it is still a prevalent evil in false religions.

From hypocrisy Jesus proceeds to the subject of fear toward God for a hypocrite seeks the favour of men and fears men rather than God. And what He says on this subject is most serious and something for His disciples to think about: "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. 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." Fear toward God is a rare virtue in the world today, and a thing for His children to retain in their hearts. The fear which a true Christian has toward God is not a craven fear like the ungodly will have in the last days when they will pray for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; but the Christian's fear is a reverential fear which draws him nearer to God rather than drives him away. God loves those who fear and worship Him. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? ... ye are of more value than many sparrows."

During Jesus' discourse one of the company sought to have Him make his brother divide the inheritance with him. And the Lord replied "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" The man, no doubt from a legal standpoint had a right to seek a division of this inheritance but Jesus, Whose Kingdom is not of this world, was concerned with more serious questions pertaining to eternal life. As Elisha said to his servant Gehazi, "Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maid-servants?" (II Kings 5:26). These are subjects, which engross the men of the world, but they have no place in the heart of a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was at this point that Jesus warned His disciples against that subtle sin of covetousness, which, along with the other sins named in the Ten Commandments, is sternly prohibited. He gave us the parable of the rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully. Surveying his fields which promised a "bumper crop," the rich man, like any other progressive wealthy man of today, planned to "pull down ... and build greater." How perfectly is the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ being fulfilled in these last days! "As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-30). This rich man said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But it was at this point that God stepped in: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Toward the close of this discourse Jesus exhorted His disciples, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that Ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:29-31). The Lord has revealed how necessary it is that we, who are His disciples, guard ourselves against the least taint of that sin of covetousness, which is sweeping the world into destruction. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

QUESTIONS

1. What was one of the conspicuous sins, which the Pharisees manifested in their religious practices?
2. What were some of the things, which they did that manifested this sin?
3. What is the difference between the fear of men in the world and the fear of Christians toward God?
4. What benefit does the Christian derive from fear toward God?
5. What event during Jesus' discourse brought up the subject of covetousness, which He discusses?
6. What was the sin of the rich man? was it his having wealth, or was it something else?
7. Abraham, we are told, had wealth. How then did he avoid falling into the sin of the rich man in the parable?
8. What was the difference in the conduct of Abraham and Lot in respect to wealth?
9. Christians must have food, raiment, and shelter. How then are they to avoid the danger into which the rich man fell?
10. What are some of the things in the world today, which show that the days of Lot are being repeated?