

LUKE

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 17 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we have seen in our study here in Luke, Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to finish the mission He was sent by God the Father to do. He came to pay in full the penalty for our sins by being the sacrificial lamb who would be crucified on the cross of Calvary!

And the timeframe here is that the cross is less than six months away and thus, they are on their way to Jerusalem to make it for the Passover meal so the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ could be sacrificed for our sins, as I have said.

So, with the earthly ministry of Jesus coming to an end, He is instilling in His men lessons of faith, things to help them to grow so that they may carry on the work after He is gone.

Now, here in Luke chapter 17 we are going to see it packed with lessons of faith as Jesus teaches His disciples the essentials of the Christian life.

In verses 1-2 Jesus is going to warn them to beware of the offenses or stumbling blocks that will come your way.

In verses 3-6 Jesus is going to teach them about the heart of forgiveness.

Then in verses 7-10 Jesus is going to teach them about faithfulness in service.

Then in verses 11-19 Jesus is going to teach his men to be thankful, to have a heart of thanksgiving.

And then He closes this chapter, in verses 20-37, with the idea of being prepared for the coming King and His Kingdom.

And as we read through this chapter keep in mind that what Jesus is looking for in the lives of His men and us, is more than just our actions, He is looking at the heart of the matter. You see, our actions can be empty, selfish and God wants all that we do to be done with a heart of love for God and for the people you are ministering to. I think that makes sense when we hear it like that, but applying that to our lives many times can be difficult.

So, a lot of lessons here, important issues that we will cover this evening. So let's dig into our study this evening as we begin reading in Luke chapter 17, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word!

LUKE 17

VERSES 1-2

Let's face it, we all would like a life without trouble but that is not what we see in this world. In fact, Jesus tells His men that "**offenses**" will come, it is impossible to stop them.

The Greek word used here for "**offenses**" is SKANDALON. The idea with this word is that it speaks of setting a trap or putting up a stumbling block.

And Jesus says these things will happen but He also warns us that we are not to be the ones who hook them or cause them to stumble. In fact, Jesus tells us that it would be better if we would just tie a millstone around our neck or a heavy stone for grinding grain, and jump into the sea rather than offending a little child or a young Christian. I feel sorry for those who try to stumble the faith of a child or the faith of a new Christian, or the faith of any Christian, God will hold them accountable for their actions!

Keep in mind that Jesus, back in Luke chapter 14 was being watched by the Jewish religious leaders, they were trying to bring Him down. And they were hard towards the followers of Jesus and thus, Jesus is speaking to them but not to just them. Anyone in any age that is leading His people astray!

What a warning that is for us today. We see all these programs and these leaders set the hook and the bait is taken and the people are hooked! They are not being drawn to the Jesus of the Bible or the Gospel message but to another Jesus, another Gospel and Jesus is going to hold them accountable!

So, it is a warning to us not to be taken in by these false teachers, these false doctrines and it goes even farther than that. You see, even as Christians we can cause others to stumble by the words we say, by the lifestyle we live, by the divisions we cause. What is the solution? John tells us, “**He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.**” I John 2:10.

Let me give you this example because we have seen this. There are many Christians who are encouraging their brother’s and sister’s in the Lord to read the book The Shack or to see the movie. That is foolishness because it is not a Christian movie or book, even though it claims to be!

I will give you just two examples of how unscriptural this is. On Page 120 of this book, The Shack, we see God the Father, called Papa in the book, and Mac talking about punishing people for their sin. And this is what the Father said, “*I don’t need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it; it’s my joy to cure it.*”

It sounds wonderful and many believe it and yet, that is not what the Scriptures tell us. God does punish people, not because He gets some kind of joy from it but because His righteousness requires it!

Think about it. If God did not punish sin is He then condoning sin? And no matter what, if He did not punish sin it would make Him unjust just as a judge who did not punish the criminal who committed murder and was let go by the judge! Then how are we not punished for our sin? Because Jesus paid in full the penalty for our sin, He took our punishment!

Listen to what we are told in Ezekiel 18:23 regarding punishment for sin. We are told, **“Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?’ says the Lord God, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’”** In Romans 6:23 we are told, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

You see, there is punishment for sin. And make no mistake about it, this book, The Shack, is filled with doctrines of demons, it is not of God. Thus, to encourage people to go to this movie, you are putting offenses or stumbling blocks before them, placing the bait in front of them to get hooked with these teachings! A strong warning that we need to heed!

The last one is obvious and yet so many miss it. Listen carefully to what Jesus says in The Shack on page 182 and you tell me if this is the real Jesus or a counterfeit Jesus that is speaking in The Shack!

“Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims. . . . I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters.”

Again, that is so easy to show how wrong he is or I should say, how wrong Jesus of the Shack is wrong. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “**. . . ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**”

There is no such thing as a universal salvation or that everyone gets saved. There is no salvation apart from Jesus, period! And keep in mind that this is just one example of the false teaching that is being brought into the church today. We need to be aware and we need to know what we believe.

You see, these things will continue to come, but, as Jesus said, “**. . . ‘It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.’**” Luke 17:1-2.

You see, it is important that we are an example to others, leading them in the way they should go, the way of God and not causing them to stumble as the religious leaders were doing.

Jesus tells us in Luke 11:52, “**Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.**” May we not hinder people coming to Jesus! May we heed the warning! You see, if we truly love our brothers, we will not bring an offense in their life!

VERSES 3-4

Here is the heart of forgiveness. And this is a tough one for us, forgiveness. But if you put it into this perspective, I think you will see you can forgive. You see, if God has forgiven you of all your sins, can you forgive another who has done you wrong? You should be able to!

Forgiveness is the first step as Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:32, “**And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.**” If you don’t, when you confront this person it won’t be pretty. You see, it won’t be done in love, but in anger, so be careful, forgive!

Now we are not talking about petty differences here, we are talking about the other person sinning. If there are things bothering us about another person, not sin, then we need to deal with that, it is our heart issue!

But if a person is in sin, you are not to allow that person to just continue on thinking they did nothing wrong, but you are to rebuke them in love with the hope of restoration, not their destruction.

Again, we must have a heart of forgiveness here. Now here is the thing, you need to confront the person who has done you wrong, this is not a time to use the church phone list and gossip and start rumors, or use Facebook or whatever. In fact, there is no time for that kind of behavior!

Keep in mind that the rabbis of Jesus’ day taught that a perfect man would forgive an individual three times for the same sin. And when Jesus says we are to forgive seven times in a day for that person He is not speaking of mathematical numbers, He is saying we are to forgive them completely!

In fact, Jesus gives to us what we are to do. In Matthew 18:15 we are told, “**Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.**” You see, restoration is the goal, and then you need to let it go, even if they do it over and over again, repenting of their error.

Now if they refuse to repent of their sin, Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:16, “**But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’**” In other words, bring a couple of godly people with you with the hopes of restoration as you confront this person in love.

But there is still that possibility that they will still refuse to repent, and Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:17, “**And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.**” That is tough, but you are doing it for that persons benefit and not to hurt them, you are doing it in love. The problem today is they just go down the street to the next church living in sin!

Now what about the person who has never repented? Are we really supposed to forgive them? Here’s the thing, we can forgive them if we choose, and that is the problem. Forgiveness is up to us. We can forgive or we can choose not to. But if you harbor un-forgiveness in your heart, it will not be good!

Remember as Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary for our sins, and He said, “**... ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’**” Luke 23:34. They never repented and yet, Jesus forgave them. May we have that same heart of forgiveness!

I realize that this is not easy and the apostles, they felt the same way as we see what they said in regards to this forgiveness that Jesus spoke of. Listen to what Luke tells us.

VERSES 5-6

I like the way that Clarke sums this up for us. He wrote, “This work of pardoning *every* offence of *every* man, and that *continually*, seemed so difficult, even to the *disciples* themselves, that they saw, without an extraordinary degree of faith, they should never be able to keep this command.”

How true that is. You see, they understood that to have a heart of forgiveness like this they needed greater faith and Jesus is going to show them that it is not great faith they needed but it is the object of their faith that must be great for them to accomplish these things. And, of course, it must be placed upon Jesus!

Think of it like this as we put this into perspective regarding where your faith is placed or in what your faith is placed in. When ice-skating, it is far better to have small faith on thick ice than great faith on thin ice. I think that makes sense. Our small faith in so great a Savior can accomplish great things. Amen to that!

And Jesus speaks of the faith of a mustard seed, which is very small and how that kind of faith can move a mulberry tree! We might not think much of this but the roots of a mulberry tree were very strong and very deep. And the idea here is if you are holding onto bitterness, unforgiveness in your heart towards others, if those roots run deep and are strong, you need to give it to Jesus, put your faith in Him, put the cross right in the middle of the situation, right in the middle of those bitter and unforgiving waters and He will make them sweet and heal those relationships.

It is as Poole said, “No duty required of men and women more grates upon flesh and blood than this of forgiving injuries, nothing that the most of people find harder to put in practice; so as indeed where there is not a root of faith, this fruit will not be found.” Thus, it truly is the object of our faith that counts! Are we willing to give it to Him or are we going to hold onto it with all of our might?

As we continue on, in Luke 17:7-10, we will see Jesus speak about faithfulness in service. Listen to what He is telling them and us!

VERSES 7-10

As you read this please understand that Jesus is not speaking of how we are saved, by works. Not at all. Spurgeon sums it up like this, “Mark you, he was not laying down the way of salvation, but pointing out a path of service for those who were already saved.”

In this section, we see Jesus speak of faithfulness in service. Not only is it your duty to forgive but it is your duty to serve!

Too often when people serve they want the pats on the back, they want the recognition, they want something in return and Jesus is saying that is the wrong heart attitude to have in service. In fact, Jesus said in Mark, giving us an example to follow, “**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**” Mark 10:45. You see, you are to humbly serve, doing what you should be doing.

In Ephesians 6:5-7 Paul put it this way, “**Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.**”

Who are you serving, man or God? When you are serving man, you will become frustrated, angry, and just pull out of the work because you are not getting what *YOU* want!

You may not agree with that, but over the last 21 years of ministry I have seen this over and over again. When your service is unto yourself and not God, that is what will happen! But, when you are serving the Lord you do it out of love, with a humble spirit, doing what a servant does, *SERVING!*

Now let me also say this because some people put service above worship. If you do, you will become frustrated, overworked, you will complain about this person not doing this and that person not doing that!

You were not created, you were not saved to work but to worship the Lord and it is out of that time we spend with Him that we serve Him and we serve Him then with joy! Look at the story of Mary and Martha! Mary served the Lord but what was most important to her was worship, so she sat at His feet. It is out of that worship that she served!

On the other hand, Martha served, and served and worship was not important and it was reflected in her actions. She was mad at her sister because her sister was not helping. If Martha took the time to worship Jesus she would never have complained but she would have served with joy. May we remember that as we serve the Lord. Make that time to worship Him, to sit at His feet and learn from Him!

VERSES 11-19

When it says that Jesus “**passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee**” the idea is that Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered a village we see ten men who were lepers standing afar off.

Keep in mind that lepers were outcasts of society who could have no contact with those who were clean, so they congregated together. That is why we see Jews and Samaritans together here; their differences were put aside so they could be with others since no one else wanted them.

Also, if you were a leper and people were coming your way you would have to yell out “Unclean! Unclean!” If the wind was blowing and you came within 150 feet of a person you were to yell out “Unclean! Unclean!”

So, get the picture of these ten men who are in this hopeless condition, no way to be cured, and here comes Jesus and they heard of His love and compassion towards people. Plus, He had the power to heal and they do the only thing left for them to do, they cry out to Him to heal them. They said, “**Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!**”

Now this is interesting to me because Jesus doesn't heal them on the spot but tells them to go to the priests and show themselves to them. You see, the priests didn't have the power to heal but according to Leviticus chapter 14 they could pronounce a person clean. Now as these men step out, move towards the priests to show themselves to, stepping out in faith, God healed them.

As Christians, the Scriptures tell us that we are to, “**. . . walk by faith and not by sight.**” II Corinthians 5:7. I wonder how many blessings of God we miss out on because we refuse to walk by faith, trusting in God? How many healings in our lives we miss out because of this? We need to get our feet moving again and see what God has in store for each of us as we walk by faith and not by sight, as we walk not by human wisdom but by the power of God!

Now as we look at these ten men it would seem that nine of these men were Jews and the other man was a Samaritan. Now the Jews hated the Samaritans for they saw them as half-breeds, half-Jew and half-gentile, but in this case, all of them having leprosy, they were willing to come together while everyone else rejected them, as I have said.

What is interesting to me is that all of them were healed but only one came back to thank Jesus for the healing, and that was this Samaritan. Thus, ten were healed of leprosy but only one was healed from sin, this Samaritan who came back.

You see, in verse 19 it can be literally translated, “**your faith has saved you.**” We see this even today where people want to be healed from their physical problems and yet they have done nothing regarding sin, they have not prepared to meet their Maker! You see, that is truly the most important issue because it has eternal consequences attached to it!

And here is something that is truly troubling. In verse 18 Jesus said, “**Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?**” In other words, only one was thankful and that was the Samaritan. All were healed physically and yet, one was thankful for what God has done!

What about you? Are you thankful for what God is doing in your life? You should be! In Psalm 100:4-5 we are told, “**Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.**”

How does God want us to enter into His presence? We don't have to guess for the Psalmist tells us that we are to, "**Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.**" Coming to worship the Lord should be a celebration not a funeral! The best way to enter into the Lord's presence is by thanking Him for what He has done and praising Him for who He is.

J. Vernon McGee sums it up like this for us. He wrote,

Someone told me the other day that he attended the services of one of the great churches of the past and had never witnessed a place that was so dead. Do you know what the problem was? People were not coming to church with praise in their hearts. They did not come to the service with thankfulness in their hearts to God. They did not enter His gates with thanksgiving. If you go to church on Sunday to worship, make *sure* you go with thanksgiving and praise in your heart. If you fail to do that, you are not going to be very helpful to your church.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible, Vol. II, pp. 822-823

As the Psalmist closes he speaks of God's mercy being everlasting. I am thankful for that. But not only is His mercy everlasting but His truth endures to all generations. That means what God has said in the Bible is for us today just as it was for the people when it was written. I am so thankful for that as well, that God's Word is truth and it will endure through all generations, even ours!

May we have thankful hearts unto the Lord and not complain about this and complain about that. We do have so much to be thankful for and yet, instead of being thankful we end up complaining about all kinds of things. Instead, may we, **“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.”** Psalm 100:4-5.

As we read on, in verses 20-37 of Luke chapter 17, we will see Jesus teach us about being prepared for the coming King and His Kingdom. It is something we should be looking forward to!

VERSES 20-21

Now as we read this we might think this is an honest question by the Pharisees, they just wanted to know when the Kingdom of God would come! But keep in mind the attitude of the religious leaders, they were hostile towards Jesus.

Thus, this Pharisee is basically saying to Jesus, ***“Either put up and show us the Kingdom of God or shut up and stop claiming that you are the Messiah!”***

Now some may not agree with that but when you understand the response of Jesus, you will see these Pharisees were not coming to Jesus with an honest question or statement.

You see, the word **“observation”** speaks of a hostile observation. And the point Jesus is making is simple. You are not going to see the Kingdom of God with a hostile, a critical, a bitter spirit. In fact, you will not see the Kingdom of God because you have rejected the King who is right there before them!

That should just make sense. Why in the world would you want the Kingdom to come when you have rejected the King Himself! That is just foolishness and yet, that is what these religious leaders were doing!

And in verse 21 Jesus told them, “**For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.**” Now keep in mind that Jesus is not saying that the Kingdom of God is “**within**” these religious leaders for they had rejected Him.

The word is better translated “**in your midst.**” How could that be? The reason that is true, and it makes sense, is that the Kingdom of God was within their midst because the King was among them, Jesus was right there before them.

Now, for us as Christians, the Kingdom of God right now is internal and spiritual, for the King resides in our hearts, our lives. But one day, in the Kingdom Age, the Kingdom will be external and physical as the King, Jesus, will rule and reign from the throne of David for 1,000 years!

And now Jesus is going to give them and us a warning about false Christ’s who will come on the scene and He will tell them and us how to know if it is really Jesus or not. I think it is important to know that because so many claims have been made that Jesus has come back and He is here or He is there. Not so because Jesus is telling us what we will see when He returns. Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 22-24

Jesus is warning His disciples and us about this deception that will come. You see, ever since the death and resurrection of Jesus, ever since He left this earth, His disciples have longed for and looked for His return. And we too long for that day when the Lord returns. Paul said **“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”** Titus 2:13.

Now, because of that, many have taken advantage of that and they have claimed to be the Messiah; like Jim Jones, David Koresh, Sun Myung Moon and-so-on.

Since the time of Jesus, even the Jews have had some sixty-four-different people claiming to be the Messiah. In fact, when we were in Israel, there was a sign in Hebrew, across from the Wailing Wall or the Western Wall of the Temple that says, ***“Prepare for the coming of the Messiah.”***

Even the Jehovah Witnesses, who have claimed on several occasions the Lord is coming on such-and-such a date, and have been wrong, have now stated that He came back in 1915 but secretly!

What is the truth? Who is right? Simply put, He has not come in His Second Coming yet. Then how can we know when He comes? That is a great question. And make no mistake about it, when Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom, everyone will see Him. It will be like lightning flashing across the sky!

Have you ever seen a lightning storm at night? I’m sure you have. What happens? The dark sky is filled with light as the lightning bolt bursts forth. When Jesus comes back, it is not in secret, but as lightning flashes across the sky, all will see it, it is not going to be just a little flicker, but the heavens will shine forth with His glory in His Second Coming!

It is as Jesus said in Matthew 24:27, 30, **“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. . . . Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”**

Make no mistake about it, when Jesus returns it won't be in secret but every eye will see Him!

VERSE 25

They were looking for the Kingdom now, but Jesus is telling them that before the Kingdom comes He will suffer, be put to death for the sins of the world.

Why? So, in the Kingdom Age there will be people who are holy, not because of their righteousness which is like filthy rags, but because the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us by faith has made us holy. Before glory, Jesus is saying, there must be death and I believe that is true in our own lives, the death of the self-life!

And that is interesting because what follows is a description of those who are so consumed with this life that they don't have time for God. Life just continues on as it always has and they are doing their own thing as the judgment of God comes upon them. Let's read on and see this warning by Jesus.

VERSES 26-30

Please hear me out on this. Some feel that Jesus is speaking of the immorality of the world before the flood, the immorality in Sodom and Gomorrah and the immorality in this world before the judgment of God is poured out once again.

I am not denying that the world was immoral, wicked before the judgment of God came upon the world in the flood or on Sodom and Gomorrah! It was, that is why the judgment came. But that is not what Jesus is saying here.

You see, Jesus is comparing what life will be like when He returns to what it was like in the days of Noah, it will be very similar.

Noah, for some 120 years built this ark that was some 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high in the middle of a plain so all could see it. It would be hard to miss this boat! The warning was there for those 120 years of the coming judgment, but the people just continued doing their own thing, life as usual, until that first rain drop fell, judgment came and they all perished except for Noah and his family.

Secondly, He looks at Lot and tells us that during His Second Coming people will be doing just what the people of Sodom were doing before judgment fell upon them. The people ignored the signs until judgment came, and it was too late except for Lot and his family who escaped.

Now in saying that we also need to understand that Jesus didn't say that all would be *good* in the world, or that there would be no crisis. Conditions before the flood and before the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah were terrible, but the wickedness was accepted as *normal* and *routine*. To me that is the key.

Look at this world today. Sin is abounding, signs are everywhere that the Lord is coming back, and yet, life goes on, business as usual, and it is going to be too late, judgment is going to fall!

Now what about us? What about Christians? What is the Lord going to do with us? Are we going through the Tribulation Period where the wrath of God is being poured out upon a Christ rejecting world?

Of course not! Really, think about it. If we are the Bride of Christ, why would Jesus pour out His wrath upon us? In fact, it would not be right because He atoned for our sins and thus, He would be judging us if we went through the Tribulation Period, any portion of it!

And yet, there are many Christians telling us that we are going to go through at least some portion of the Tribulation Period, anywhere from 3½ years to the complete 7-year Tribulation Period, all the way to the end!

I disagree. First of all, the 70th week of Daniel found in chapter 9, that last 7-year period is dealing with the nation of Israel and a Christ rejecting world. God will spare His people before He pours out His judgment as we see with both Noah and Lot.

In fact, before Sodom could be destroyed the angel of God told Lot, “**Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.’ . . .**” Genesis 19:22.

You see, judgment could not come until he was taken out of the way and I believe the same is true regarding the Tribulation Period. God’s judgment will not come until His Bride, the Church, is removed, we call it the Rapture!

It is as Jesus said in Revelation 3:10 to the faithful church, “**Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**”

Jesus is going to keep us out of this trial that is coming to test the earth dwellers, which we are not, for our citizenship is in heaven! Are you ready is the warning! Don't be caught unprepared! Come to Jesus and repent of your sins asking Him to be Lord and Savior of your life!

Now Jesus is going to share with us how people can be so consumed with this life that they miss Jesus!

VERSES 31-33

Jesus is showing us how wicked our hearts are. He starts out in the days of Noah and can you imagine in Noah's day as that first rain drop fell from the sky, for prior to that there was no rain, the ground was watered by a mist, and all the people who ran to their homes to gather their possessions, their wealth, their things, and they all perished with them! That is the craziest thing to do. No one does that, do they? Hang on.

You see, the point Jesus is making is we need to be ready and not let earthly things entangle us. And the other example He gives is Lot's wife, who left Sodom but her heart was still there and she turned back towards what she left behind, what she longed for and was turned into a pillar of salt!

Think about it, what is in this world, what possessions do you want to take with you, are unwilling to let go of? I hope there is none, for all we need is Jesus, it is found in Him!

I guess the only thing we should desire to take with us is family and friends and folks, the only way that is going to happen is they need to receive Jesus, and in that they will enter into that eternal life with Him.

And Jesus wants us to remember this lesson from Lot's wife. Pate tells us, "The word Jesus used for 'remember' . . . means to pay heed to; to learn a lesson from."

Make no mistake about it, people still do that today. Remember Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and all the people who refused to leave and were left with nothing. Now I can understand why they would go into grocery stores and get food and water because they had none. I have no problem with that. The place was under water!

What I did find interesting, as New Orleans was under water, no electricity that people were looting stores for stereos, all kinds of electronic things, like televisions! Take heed, we are no different than in the days of Noah or Lot!

And just to drive home this point, Jesus tells us, "**Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.**" Luke 17:33.

Are you willing to die to self and live for Him? That is what Jesus is talking about, that is what He is asking! It is as Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-26, "**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. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'**"

It seems so obvious and yet, so many sell their soul to the Devil and lose out on eternal life with Jesus. But the choice is yours!

VERSES 34-36

These are interesting verses and I want you to listen carefully to what I am going to say about them and you search it out and see what the Lord is saying here. I think many miss the point and I have in the past!

First of all, this tells me that God knew the earth is a sphere for His coming will be at night for some, morning for others, and in the middle of the day for still others all at the same time!

How can that be? Because the earth is a sphere just like we are told in Isaiah 40:22, **“It is He who sits above *the circle of the earth*, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.”**

There are those who love to make fun of Christians and call us “flat earthers!” We are not flat earthers, never have been and never will be. You see, the Lord has clearly told us that the earth is not flat, but it is a sphere. It took man a long time to figure that one out, but the Creator of heaven and earth knew exactly what He had created!

That, obviously is not the controversial part. This is. Some see these verses as speaking of the Rapture of the Church that occurs prior to the 7-year Tribulation Period?

Paul tells us of this event in I Thessalonians 4:16-18, **“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”**

In the Rapture God takes away the believers unto Himself, He comes for the Church and meets us in the air, and then God pours out His wrath on a Christ rejecting world and after the 7 years the Lord returns with His Bride, with the Church to set-up His Kingdom.

Now it sounds great, like it fits, but when you look at the context of what Jesus is speaking of, it does not fit. Remember, ***CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT!***

What is Jesus speaking of? He is speaking of the coming judgment of God upon a Christ rejecting world. And think about this. When the Rapture happens do you really think you will have time to go into your house and get your autographed photo of Bart Star? Not at all. It happens in the twinkling of the eye!

Also, keep in mind that the church was a mystery that Paul was shown, so they were not thinking of the church at this point and not the Rapture as well.

The Bible Exposition Commentary summed it up like this. They wrote,

Luke 17:30-36 describes what will occur when Jesus Christ returns in judgment to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom on earth (Rev 19:11-20:6). Believers in every age of the church can take warning from these verses, but they apply in a special way to Israel at the end of the age (see Matt 24:29-44). When Jesus comes for His church and takes it to heaven, it will happen “in a moment in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor 15:52). Nobody taking part in the rapture of the church need worry about being on a housetop or in a field and wanting to get something out of the house! However, when the Lord returns to fix earth, His coming will first be preceded by a “sign!” in heaven (Matt 24:30-31), and some people might try to hurry home to rescue something. “Remember Lots wife!”

The verb taken in Luke 17:34-36 does not mean “taken to heaven” but “taken away in judgment” (Matt 24:36-41). The person “left” is a believer who enters into the kingdom. Noah and his family were “left” to enjoy a new beginning, while the whole population of the earth was “taken” in the Flood. In spite of their sins, Lot and his daughters were “left” while the people in Sodom and Gomorrah were “taken” when the fire and brimstone destroyed the cities.

The fact that it is night in Luke 17:34 but day in Luke 17:35-36 indicates that the whole world will be involved in the return of Jesus Christ in glory. “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him” (Rev 1:7).

- The Bible Exposition Commentary

So, I believe that this is speaking of the coming judgment of God, that those who reject Him during the Tribulation Period will not enter into the Kingdom Age while those who do will enter in! The key of course is to be ready, the Lord is coming back!

And if you still don't think this is speaking of the judgment of God upon a Christ rejecting world, I think Luke 17:37 will help you see that point. Listen to what we are told.

VERSE 37

This seems to be speaking of judgment, that it is going to take place, you can't escape it outside of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 19:17-21 we see a parallel passage. I believe this is describing what Jesus said here in Luke, this judgment of God.

These verses here in Revelation 19:17-21 say, **“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.’ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”**

This is the Battle of Armageddon where the armies of the world come to fight against our Lord and with the sword that proceeds from His mouth, His Word, they are destroyed **“And all the birds were filled with their flesh.”**

But when are these things going to take place? What will be some of the signs? For the disciples of Jesus, they were heading to Jerusalem and maybe thinking this judgment would come now and the Kingdom would be established. But remember what Jesus said, **“But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”** That has taken place and now, as we live in the age of *GRACE*, we await the Lord’s return for His Bride, the Church and the start of the Tribulation Period!

And I think those days are getting close. Listen to what Paul warned Timothy regarding the things that will take place in the latter days, in the end times and that warning can be found in II Timothy 3:1-5, where we read, **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”**

I think the world we live in today parallels very closely to what Paul is talking about. You see, the judgment of God is coming to those that don't know the King. Are you prepared to meet Him?

So, a lot of lessons we have learned tonight. We saw the warning that offenses or stumbling blocks will come our way – Luke 17:1-2.

Then we looked at having a heart of forgiveness – Luke 17:3-6.

We looked at being faithful in our service to the Lord – Luke 17:7-10.

Also, we saw that we are to be thankful or to have a heart of thanksgiving – Luke 17:11-19.

And we closed this chapter by looking at the idea of being prepared for the coming King and His Kingdom – Luke 17:20-37.

Lord, help us to apply these lessons to our lives and keep our eyes upon You, for You are coming!