

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

✝ THE BOOK OF LUKE

WHAT WE MOST ASSUREDLY BELIEVE

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, ASSOCIATED

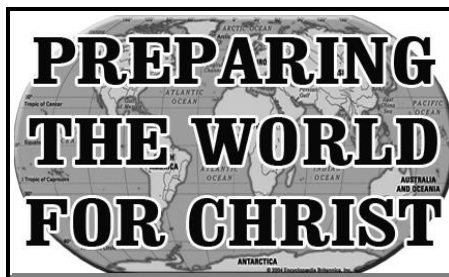
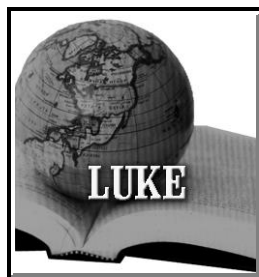
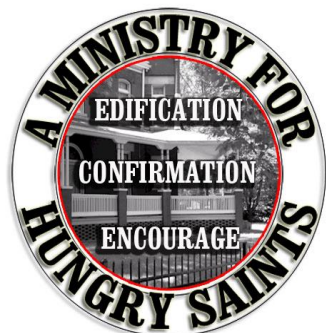
An overview of the Gospel of Luke, by Given O. Blakely

LESSON NUMBER 55

COMMENTARY ON: 18:1-17

PERSISTENT PRAYER, SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND INFANTS.

Jesus addresses the matter of prayer – persistent prayer. He did this by delivering a parable intending to teach men that they always should persevere in prayer, and not faint, or give up. Prayer is more than a routine. Neither, indeed, is it driven by formulae. There are matters that are intended to be addressed by persistent supplication. Jesus then spoke of the matter of self-righteousness, which prohibits a person from being justified. He fortifies the fact that religion must never be for show, or be motivated by pride. Then He gives the disciples a sterling lesson on little children, and how they are to be received. In the make-up of a little child are characteristics that are to be found in those desiring to enter the kingdom of God. He is orienting His disciples for the time when He will no longer be with them, and they will have to live by faith, not by sight.

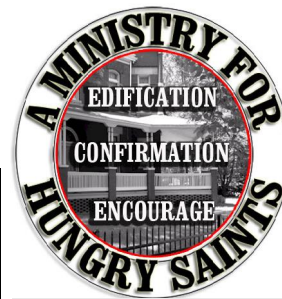


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Luke, 4/14/17

Lesson Number 55



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

54 VERSIONS OF THE ENGLISH SCRIPTURES

ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005); AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965); ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901); BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949); BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB=Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899); EMTV=English Majority Text (2002); ERV=English Revised Version (1885); ETH=Etheridge Translation (1849); ETRV=Easy to Read (1999); ESV=English Standard Version (2001); GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599); GNB=Good News (1966); GSNT=Goodspeed (1923); GWN=God's Word (1995); IE=International English (1973); NIRV=New Int'l Readers Version (1998); ISV=International Standard Version (1967); JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917); JUB=Jubilee Bible (2003); KJV=King James Version (1611); LITV=Literary Translation of the Bible (1976); LEW=Lewis Translation (1896); LIVING=Living Bible (1971); MESSAGE=The Message (1993); MGI=Peshitta Translation (2006); MIT=Idiomatic Version; MKJV=Modern KJV (1962); MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001); MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852); NAB=New American Bible (2002); NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977); NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995); NIB=New International Bible; NIV=New International Version (1984); NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985); NKJV=New King James Version (1979); NLT=New Living Translation (1996); NOY=George Noyes Bible (1869); NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989); PHILLIPS=J.B. Phillips New Testament (1962); PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1995); ROT=Rotherham Bible (1999); RPTE=Revised Patriarchal Greek Orthodox New Testament; RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952); TNK=J.P. Tanakj (1985); WEB=Webster Bible (1833); WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903); WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937); TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526); WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382); YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

FRIBERG; LOUW-NIDA; LIDDELL SCOTT; THAYER; VGNT GREEK DICTIONARY; GINGRICH, DANKER,

PERSUADED OF THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING THE CERTAINTY OF THE THINGS WE BELIEVE, LUKE MAKES US MORE FIRM BY BUTTRESSING OUR FAITH, AND CONFIRMING WE HAVE NOT EMBRACED FABLES.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut out to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

PERSISTENT PRAYER, SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND INFANTS.

“ Luke 18:1 ” And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; ² Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. ³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. ⁴ And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; ⁵ Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. ⁶ And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. ⁷ And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? ⁸ I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? ⁹ And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰ Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. ¹⁵ And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.” . . . Luke 18:1-17

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Jesus addresses the matter of prayer – persistent prayer. He did this by delivering a parable intending to teach men that they always should persevere in prayer, and not faint, or give up. Prayer is more than a mere routine. It is not merely rehearsing our troubles to the Lord. The Kingdom of

God is “*not in word,*” or “*not a matter of talk.*” The Lord Jesus will give us an example of praying always and not fainting. He will accentuate a Divine trait of which we must be cognizant.

Neither, indeed, is persistent prayer driven by formulae or mere repetition. Further, there are matters

that are intended to be addressed by *persistent* supplication.

Jesus then spoke of the matter of self righteousness, which prohibits a person from being justified. He fortifies the fact that religion must never be for show, or be motivated by pride, which is one of the premier transgressions.

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Then He gives the disciples a sterling lesson on little children, and how they are to be received. In the make-up of a little child are characteristics that are to be found in those desiring to enter the kingdom of God. He is orienting His disciples for the time when He will no longer be with them, and they will have to live by faith, not by sight.

Up to this time, they have been walking by sight, assessing all that Jesus was doing with their natural senses. At this time, it is not clear what they actually knew about the unseen realm. It is not likely it went beyond what Moses and the prophets had said about it – which was very little.

- ⇒ *"God is in heaven"* (Deut 4:39; Josh 2:11).
- ⇒ God's *"dwelling place"* is in heaven

(1 Kgs 8:30).

- ⇒ The Lord's throne is in heaven (Psa 11:4).
- ⇒ God's Word is settled in heaven (Psa 119:89).
- ⇒ God looked down from His habitation in heaven (Deut 26:25).
- ⇒ Lucifer is fallen from heaven (Isa 14:12).
- ⇒ A holy one [angel] came down from heaven (Dan 4:13).
- ⇒ Exceedingly rare visions were given to Isaiah (Isa 6:1-8), Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1; 8:3; 40:2), and Daniel (Dan 7:13-14; 9:9-10). They were not lengthy, and were shrouded with mystery.

Most of the time when something came down from heaven, it was speaking of the created heavens being the area from which it came.

They did not hear things such as are addressed to the church, which is the body of Christ.

- ⇒ The wrath of God revealed *"from heaven"* (Rom 1:18).
- ⇒ The *"Second man, which is the Lord from heaven"* (1 Cor 15:47).
- ⇒ *"Our house, which is from heaven"* (2 Cor 5:2).
- ⇒ Waiting for *"His Son from heaven"* (1 Thess 1:10).
- ⇒ Preaching *"with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven"* (1 Pet 1:12).
- ⇒ *"The whole family in heaven and hearth"* (Eph 3:15).
- ⇒ Our conversation, or manner of life, being *"in heaven"* (Phil 3:20).
- ⇒ *"The hope which is laid up for you in heaven"* (Col 1:5).
- ⇒ Having *"a better and enduring substance in heaven"* (Heb 10:34).
- ⇒ Names *"written in heaven"* (Heb 12:23).
- ⇒ *"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Pet 1:4).
- ⇒ *"Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."* (1 John 5:7).

THINK OF WHAT JOHN SAW IN HEAVEN

- ⇒ An opened door (Rev 4:1)
- ⇒ A throne, and the One sitting on it

(Rev 4:2).

- ⇒ The countenance of the One sitting on the throne (Rev 4:3).
- ⇒ A rainbow round about the throne (Rev 4:3).
- ⇒ Twenty-four seats around the throne, and twenty-four elders sitting upon them, with crowns of gold on their heads (Rev 4:4).
- ⇒ Lightnings and thunderings proceeding out of the throne (Rev 4:5).
- ⇒ Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne (Rev 4:5).
- ⇒ Before the throne a sea of glass, clear as crystal (Rev 4:6).
- ⇒ Four beasts full of eyes before and behind, and what each beast was like – a lion, a calf, the face of a man, and a flying eagle (Rev 4:7).
- ⇒ Each beast had six wings about him (Rev 4:7).
- ⇒ The beasts did not rest day or night, saying continually, *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come"* (Rev 4:8).
- ⇒ When the four beasts gave God glory and honor, *"The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created"* (Rev 4:10-11).
- ⇒ He saw *"in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals"* (Rev 5:1).
- ⇒ He *"saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon."* (Rev 5:2-4).
- ⇒ He *"beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth"* (Rev 5:6).
- ⇒ The Lamb came *"and took the book"*

out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. And when He had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." (Rev 5:8)

- ⇒ John saw "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev 5:13)
- ⇒ "And the four beasts said, Amen.

And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev 5:10)

This was not the whole of what he saw, but was only an introductory vision. Thirty-five times in the Revelation John said "I saw." After the fifth chapter, it took seventeen packed

chapters to record what John saw.

All of that revelation was the result of Jesus dying, being raised from the dead, ascending into heaven, and assuming the control of the Kingdom. All of the revelation had to do with the impact of Christ's triumphant reign. And was designed to comfort the saints.

We are living in a new day – the day of salvation. Christ's words in this text will be more instructive to the saints than any prior words delivered to the saints. This has been recorded for us in order that we might see the manner of the kingdom, and be adapted to it.

HE SPAKE A PARABLE TO THE END

" Luke 18:1a "And He spake a parable unto them to this end . . ."

TO THIS END

"And He spake a parable unto them to this end . . ." Other versions read, "to show," ^{NASB} "to the effect," ^{RSV} "the point of which was," ^{BBE} "in order to impress on them," ^{CJB} "to the purport," ^{DARBY} and "signifying." ^{TNT}

In delivering this parable, Jesus does not say "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke informs us

of that intention, but salvation is calculated to enable men to arrive at this conclusion when hearing the parable. In fact, the things of God have been revealed so that they cannot be comprehended by the unspiritual, disinterested, carnal, and passive.

THE MORAL CONSTRAINT OF THE TRUTH

The truth of God has a morally constraining influence. It tugs at the heart, as it were, demanding a response – preferably a godly one. The reason

for this constraint is that the Holy Spirit is, at it were, wed to the truth. That is one of the reasons for Him being identified as "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 26:13). As soon as it is spoken, whether in a straightforward manner, or in parabolic form He elicits a response to that truth. This is precisely why some reject the Word, and some accept the Word. More is at work than a verbal statement and the human intellect. Such is the case with this parable. The righteous will find their thought processes awakened.

MEN OUGHT ALWAYS TO PRAY AND NOT TO FAINT

" . . . that men ought always to pray, and not to faint . . ."

When it is comprehended, this parable will lead those with faith to this conclusion. Jesus will then reason upon the basis of that conclusion.

THE "OUGHT" FACTOR

" . . . that men ought . . ."

Other versions read "should," ^{NIV} "need to," ^{NRSV} "were to go on," ^{BBE} "they must," ^{CJB} "necessity of," ^{MIT} "it behooves us." ^{TS2009}

Unregenerate men do not like to be told what they ought to do, and many professing Christians feel the same way. But I will tell you that if you choose to be a follower of Jesus. He will tell you what you "ought" to do.

From linguistic, or language, point of view this word is a subjunctive present. In English, it is a subjunctive, and is used to refer to an action that is necessary, or must be done. In the Greek language it means, *ōtī* it is necessary, there is need of, it behooves, is right and proper; it denotes any sort of necessity, *ō* ^{THAYER}

ōtī one must, one has to, ^{FRIBERG} *ōtī* to be that which must necessarily take place, ^{LOUW-NIDA} *ōtī* it is binding on one to do a thing, ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} and *ōtī* is necessary, one must or has to. ^{GINGRICH}

Therefore, Jesus did not speak this parable to suggest a preferred action, or set an option before the people. This is something that **MUST** be done.

THE "ALWAYS" STIPULATION

" . . . always to pray . . ."

Other versions read, "should

always pray," ^{NIV} "go on making prayer," ^{BBE} "pray continuously," ^{CEB} "always keep praying," ^{CJB} and "the need to pray continually" ^{NJB}

This is not true of some praying, but all praying. This is not speaking of "vain repetitions," uttered heartlessly as though men "will be heard for their much speaking" (Matt 6:7). The prayers of reference are obviously ones for which there is no apparent and immediate answer. What are we to do in such a case? Are we to assume God does not intend to answer our request? Indeed not, even though you may be tempted to think that is the case!

NOT FAINTING

" . . . and not to faint . . . "

Other versions read, "not lose heart," ^{NKJV} "not give up," ^{NIV} "not get tired," ^{BBE} "not become discouraged," ^{CSB} "not weary," ^{ETH} and "wax faint." ^{GENEVA}

The lexical meaning of the word translated "faint" is, "to be utterly spiritless, to be wearied out, exhausted," ^{THAYER} "to be faint-hearted." ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

The lack of an immediate answer, or a long delay, is not to be interpreted as a Divine "No!" Paul, for example,

prayed three times for his "thorn" to be removed. He kept on praying until the answer came to him – an answer he had not planned on receiving: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). There is no record of him ever again praying for that thorn to be removed. However, he did continue in prayer until the answer came.

Seen correctly, a delayed answer to prayer is really a testing of one's faith. If the person continues to pray, and does not faint, he will pass the test. If not, he must seek for more grace.

A JUDGE THAT DID NOT FEAR GOD OR REGARD MAN

"². . . Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: ³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. ⁴ And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; ⁵ Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

A JUDGE THAT WAS NOT IDEAL

" . . . Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man . . . "

Jesus will show that the worst among men can be moved to have compassion – when the petitioner cries out continually and does not faint. If this is so, and it is, then man must know that God, who is "good" in every sense of the word, does not in any sense disregard man. How, then can we expect less from God than we do from unjust judges?

A WIDOW WITH AN ADVERSARY

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

This is obvious an adversary that was aggressive, and against which the widow who is powerless. She has to

resort to the law – and rightly so, for God has established the ruler, civil governor, and political judge to be the "revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom 13:4). God said of father Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen 18:19).

God notes when there is injustice in the land – whether civil authorities see it or not.

⇒ GOD'S INDICTMENT BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF JUSTICE. "None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity." (Isa 59:4)

⇒ JUDGEMENT AT A DISTANCE. "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." (Isa 59:14)

⇒ GOD IS NOT UNJUST. "For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men, to crush under His feet all the prisoners of the earth. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, to

subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not." (Lam 3:36)

⇒ CONDEMNING INJUSTICE. "Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right." (Amos 5:11-12)

⇒ WRONG JUDGMENT. "Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." (Hab 1:4)

This is why the Lord referred to this judge as one who "feared not God, neither regarded man." He is going to show that the lowest of men can, if the offended perseveres, sometimes do what is right. And, God is far superior to them.

HE WOULD NOT FOR A WHILE

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

A "while" can be a long time – at least to the one who is waiting. When the Assyrians, captured and scattered Israel, God told them, "For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction" (Isa 10:25). In that case, the time was brief indeed, for Sennacherib's army was slain over night by an angel, and Sennacherib himself returned to his homeland and was killed.

On the other hand, the Lord used the same language when describing the coming of the Lord. To First Century believers He said, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb 10:37). We are still waiting, and we must still be persevering.

BECAUSE THIS WIDOW TROUBLETH ME

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

Other versions read, "yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out," ^{NASB} "yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!" ^{NIV} yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!" ^{NIV, 2011} "Yet because this widow continues to bother me, I will defend and protect and avenge her, lest she give me intolerable annoyance and wear me out by her continual coming or at the last she come and rail on me or assault me or strangle me." ^{AMPLIFIED}

His decision was not based on the need of the widow, or the impact her adversary had upon her. It was his own inconvenience and aggravation that moved him to do the right thing.

Interestingly, the word translated "weary" has the following lexical

meaning: ὀδενος that part of the face which is under the eyes; a blow in that part of the face; a black and blue spot, a bruise); properly, to beat black and blue, to smite so as to cause bruises and livid spots, ὀδενος THAYER ὀδενος to cause great annoyance to and thus to wear someone out, ὀδενος LOUW-NIDA ὀδενος literally strike beneath the eye, give a black eye; figuratively annoy greatly, pester, wear out, ὀδενος FRIBERG ὀδενος strike one under the eye:-Pass. to have a black eye, ὀδενος LIDDELL-SCOTT ὀδενος to strike one under the eye: to have a black eye. ὀδενος GINGRICH

I doubt this philosophical meaning of the word "weary" represents the meaning our Lord was conveying. The fact that several versions of Scripture yield to this secondary meaning confirms that many translators appear to lack an understanding of both the Living God and the Scriptures. In my view, this is a most serious lack. It certainly does not justify an inordinate dependence on the Greek language for the understanding of Scripture. Translators are to know God Himself, being familiar with both His purpose and ways.

HEAR WHAT THE UNJUST JUDGE SAITH

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

Remember, this is a parable, not the recounting of an historical incident. A parable is a purposeful structuring of a circumstance or a practice in which kingdom realities can be seen, although they are hidden to the worldly "wise and prudent," (Matt 11:25) – a circumstance for which Jesus gave thanks to God: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O

Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt 11:25-26).

Jesus will, then, speak of an attribute of God that is not generally known, and which the "wise and prudent" are not intended to know. As He will point out, however, this is something that the people of God are to

know. That is precisely why Jesus will now enlarge on the matter. Remember, Jesus is speaking to His disciples (Lk 17:22-37). That is why He is explaining the parable as He did the parables of the sower (Matt 13:18-23), the wheat and the tares (Matt 13:36-43), the net (Matt 13:47-51), and the parable of defiling influences (Mk 7:14-23). Such explanations underscore the fact that these are things the Lord intends for Jesus' followers to know, and on which they are to reckon, or reason.

SHALL NOT GOD AVENGE HIS OWN ELECT

" ⁷ And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?"

AND SHALL NOT GOD AVENGE
"And shall not God avenge . . ."

Other versions read, "bring about justice," ^{NASB} "grant justice," ^{NRSV} "vindicate," ^{RSV} "do right in their cause," ^{BEB} "give them justice quickly," ^{CEB} "judge in their favor," ^{CJB} "take vengeance for them speedily," ^{LEW} "perform their vengeance quickly," ^{MGI}

and "defend and protect and avenge them speedily." ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word "avenge" is a strong word. The Lord declares, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Heb 10:30). Other

versions read, *"I will repay."*
NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV/RSV *"I will pay people back,"*
CEB *and "I will repay [I will exact the compensation]."*
AMPLIFIED

The word *"avenge"* speaks of
 retaliation and punishment,
ö STRONG
 defend, one person from another,
ö THAYER
 procure justice for someone.
ö GINGRICH

This is a Divine trait, and it is intended to comfort the saints who are oppressed, maligned, abused, and afflicted – like God punished the Egyptians, smiting them for what they did to the Israelites (Ex 12:27,29).

The people of God are not permitted to avenge themselves. The reason for this prohibition is given: *"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"* (Rom 12:19).

The abuse of God's people will not be overlooked or forgotten by God. In the prospect of that, they are not to take matters into their own hands.

Remember when John saw some martyred souls *"under the altar"* – those who had been killed because of their testimony? They knew this trait of the Almighty, and therefore cried out: *"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"* (Rev 6:10). They would not be told to forget it, but to wait for God. There were others who would slay more of their brethren, and God would repay them also (Rev 6:11).

It is imperative that we culture a

proper view of God, and not present Him as One who overlooks the abuses and afflictions of His people.

HIS OWN ELECT "... His own elect ..."

Other versions read, *"His chosen ones,"*
NIV *"his saints,"*
BBE *"His chosen people,"*
CEB *and "His choice ones."*
YLT

These are not the people who chose God, but the people whom, God Himself has chosen. They are referred to as *"the elect"* (Mk 13:22), *"the elect of God"* (Col 3:12), *"the election"* (Rom 11:7), *"a chosen generation"* (1 Pet 2:9), and *"called, chosen, and faithful"* (Rev 17:14). Here, Jesus appropriately refers them to God's *"own elect."*

WHICH CRY OUT TO HIM "... which cry day and night unto Him ..."

Other versions read, *"whose cries come day and night to His ears,"*
BBE *"who call upon Him by day and by night,"*
MRD *and "they keep calling to Him day and night."*
NJB

The word *"cry"* means *"to cry to one for help, implore His aid,"*
THAYER *and "as crying out in anguish shout, cry."*
FRIBERG
 It is a cry of anguish and helplessness – one of pain and discomfort.

These are God's chosen ones, but things are not going well for them in the earth. There is oppression, opposition, persecution, and discomfort. They are calling out for help, but none is coming – yet they continue to cry *"unto Him."*

THOUGH HE BEAR LONG WITH THEM

"... though He bear long with them?"

Other versions read, *"delay long over them,"*
NASB *"keep putting them off,"*
NIV *"delay long in helping them,"*
NRSV *"yet He is longsuffering over them,"*
ASV *"though He is long in doing it,"*
BBE *"He still delays to help them,"*
NJB *"though He defer them,"*
PNT *and "delay help on their behalf."*
AMPLIFIED

One of God's intentions for His children is that they have *"patience,"* being *"patient in well doing"* (Rom 2:7), and *"patient in tribulation"* (Rom 12:12). The Lord will direct their hearts *"into the patient waiting for Christ"* (2 Thess 3:5). They are admonished, *"Be patient"* (James 5:7), and *"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"* (James 5:8). When they *"do well,"* yet *"suffer for it,"* they are to take it *"patiently,"* for *"this is acceptable with God"* (1 Pet 2:20).

God's people are not to be discouraged, give up, or quit easily. God is not honored by such conduct, nor are the saints helped along by it. When anyone drops out of the good fight of faith, they forfeit the victory.

How does the Lord develop such patience in His people? He does it by not running quickly to them every time they cry out. He does it by bearing long with them while they are in an uncomfortable situation. After all, they are in a hostile and unsympathetic world, and His forbearance accentuates that situation. Mark it well, this is the way God is. He has a mind to your perfection, and His waiting is intended to promote that perfection. We are admonished to continuing praying about it.

HE WILL AVENGE THEM SPEEDILY

"^{8a} I tell you that He will avenge them speedily."

HE WILL AVENGE THEM

"... I Tell you that He will avenge them ..."

Other versions read, *"He will bring about justice for them,"*
NASB *"will see that they get justice,"*
NIV *"vindicate them,"*
RSV *"do right in their cause,"*
BBE *"will judge in their favor,"*
CJB *"perform their vengeance,"*
MGI *"make a righteous*

judgment on their behalf,"
MIT

HE WILL DO IT SPEEDILY

"... speedily."

Other versions read, *"quickly,"*
NIV

"swiftly." ^{CSB}

The answer will not be long, and drawn out. It will be swift, instant, and total. The situation may have lasted a

long time – like four hundred years of bondage in Egypt. But the revenge will be swift, with the entire nation of Israel coming out of Egypt safely in a brief time, having plundered the Egyptians

(Ex 12:35-36), and doing so in a single night (Ex 12:41,51). Israel was fully vindicated, and were even paid for all their labors, and were ready to possess the promised land.

NEVERTHELESS WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH

^{8b} *Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"*

WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH

"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh . . ."

Other versions read, *"And yet, when the Son of Man comes,"* ^{NRSV} *"when the Son of Man returns,"* ^{NLT} and *"but the Son of Man having come."* ^{YLT}

Here is a Pivotal fact in this *"day of salvation"* – it is *"when the Son of Man cometh."* This is a signal event of which the church is not to be ignorant, and for which it must be prepared. There are two hundred and fifty verses on this subject from Matthew through Revelation. In the Gospels alone, Jesus referred to it in one hundred and eighty-seven verses. The saints are not to be ignorant of this day! It is referred to as:

⇒ *"His coming"* (1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 2 Thess 2:8; 2 Pet 3:4; 1 John 2:28)

⇒ When *"the Son of man shall come"* (Matt 16:27)

⇒ *"The Son of man coming"* (Matt 16:28)

⇒ *"When He cometh"* (Matt 24:46)

⇒ *"The hour wherein the Son of man cometh"* (Matt 25:13)

⇒ *"When the Son of man shall come in His glory"* (Matt 25:31)

⇒ *"The Son of man . . . coming in the clouds of heaven"* (Mk 14:62)

⇒ *"When He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the*

holy angels" (Luke 9:26)

⇒ *"His appearing"* (2 Tim 4:1,8)

⇒ *"The appearing"* (1 Tim 6:14; 1 Pet 1:7)

⇒ When Christ *"shall appear"* (Col 3:4)

⇒ *"When the chief Shepard shall appear"* (1 Pet 5:4)

⇒ *"When He shall appear"* (1 John 2:28; 3:2)

⇒ *"The day of the Lord"* (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10).

All of salvation is both initiated and orchestrated to ready men for that appearing.

⇒ Then Jesus shall seen by all *"as He is"* (1 John 3:2).

⇒ He will be revealed as He is now, *"who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords"* (1 Tim 6:15).

⇒ Then, the saints will be seen for what they really are (Rom 8:19), and shall be like Him (1 John 3:2).

⇒ At that time, the heavens and the earth shall flee from before His face (Rev 10:11).

⇒ The arch foe of Christ and His church shall be *"destroyed with the brightness of His coming"* (2 Thess 2:8).

⇒ Then the wicked and the righteous will be forever separated (Matt 13:41-43).

⇒ This coming will induct the day of

judgment (Matt 35:32).

The saints of God are admonished:

⇒ *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."* (Matt 24:42).

⇒ *"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not"* (Luke 12:40).

⇒ *"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober"* (1 Thess 5:6).

⇒ *"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"* (2 Pet 3:11-12).

⇒ *"And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at his coming"* (1 John 2:28).

One of the deficiencies of our time is the near-total lack of awareness that the Lord Jesus is coming again. It is time to ponder how Jesus concluded this parable. When Jesus comes, He will be looking for something.

SHALL HE FIND FAITH ON THE EARTH?

" . . . shall He find faith on the earth?"

Other versions read, *"will He really find faith on the earth?"* ^{NKJV} *"will He find faith on the earth?"* ^{NIV} *"will He find people on earth who have faith?"* ^{NIRV} *"will he find any faith on earth?"* ^{NJB}

"how many will He find on the earth who have faith" ^{NLT} and *"will He find [persistence in] faith on the earth?"* ^{AMPLIFIED} This is what He will be looking for – people who have and are living by faith. Will He find such people, that is the question.

The returning Jesus will not be looking for large churches, happy homes, wealthy Christians, well educated people, etc. He will be looking for faith – for those who are living by faith (Heb 10:38), are walking by faith (2 Cor 5:7), standing by faith (1 Cor 1:24), are waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal 5:5), and who through faith are inheriting the promises (Heb 6:12).

Early believers were exhorted to *"continue in the faith"* (Acts 14:22), and are said to have been *"established*

in the faith" (Acts 16:5). They were admonished to *"stand fast in the faith"* (1 Cor 16:13), and examine themselves *"whether ye be in the faith"* (2 Cor 13:5).

Believers are told they shall eventually be presented *"holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight: IF ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel"* (Col 1:23). Solemnly they are told, *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."* (Col 2:6-7). Satan is effectively resisted by those who are *"steadfast in the faith"* (1 Pet 5:9).

As you peruse the church scene,

is this the kind of people you see? There are people who admit there is no question about the necessity of faith, but too often it is associated with coming into Christ, not with abiding in Christ. It has been revealed that the church is to be taught for the purpose of *"the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* (Eph 4:13).

We must not fail to take hold of what Jesus said here. He has told us what He will be looking for when He comes again. He will not be looking for a profession of faith, but for those who possess faith – for those who are living by faith and contending for it.

HE SPAKE THIS PARABLE TO THOSE WHO TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES

"⁹ And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others . . ."

HE SPAKE THIS PARABLE UNTO CERTAIN

"And He spake this parable unto ..."

This second parable was addressed to a certain kind of people – a people who had not stressed faith, and were not living by faith. They were not noted for importunate prayer and fervent supplication. What they stressed had very little to do with faith, believing, and trusting in the Lord.

THEY TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES

" . . . certain which trusted in

themselves that they were righteous . . ."

Other versions read, *"were confident of their own righteousness,"* ^{NIV} *"were certain that they were good,"* ^{BBE} *"had convinced themselves that they were righteous,"* ^{CEB} and *"were relying on their own righteousness."* ^{CJB}

Who are these people? They are the ones who are not seeking *"first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness"* (Matt 6:33). And why are they not seeking this righteousness? Simply because they perceive no need to do so. They would probably not say they were trusting in themselves—but that is actually what they are doing. Such people will not be blessed by the coming of the Lord, for He will be

looking for faith on the earth.

THEY DESPISED OTHERS

" . . . and despised others . . ."

Other versions read, *"viewed others with contempt,"* ^{NASB} *"looked down on everyone else."* ^{NIV}

Bringing this into our day, this kind of person would be one who had adopted a sectarian stance, and was trusting in his acceptance upon the basis of being a member of a particular denomination or sect. He would see that sect as uniquely sanctioned by God because of their theological stance. Consequently they will only receive and respect those who belong to their own sect. This attitude is still unacceptable.

TWO MEN WENT UP TO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY

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

WENT UP TO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY

"Two men went up into the temple to pray . . ."

Referring to Isaiah 56:7, Jesus once referred to the temple as *"the house of prayer"* (Matt 21:13) – a place devoted to things pertaining to God

Himself. Jesus will now show that the condition and intent of any person has a direct bearing on their prayer.

THE SOCIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO

" . . . the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. "

Actually, there really was no genuine difference between the two. The distinction was one defined by men, and forced upon others. It was not a division that God had made.

A Pharisee

The "*Pharisee*" was not an office instituted by God. All of the offices instituted by God revolved around the will of God: Lawgiver (Moses), High Priests, and priests (Levites) performing various functions related to the Tabernacle and the Temple. The Pharisee had no such connection.

Pharisees were humanly designated interpreters of the Scriptures. They are thought to have been originated about 145 B.C. EASTON'S DICT

A Publican

A "*publican*" was a collector of taxes for the Roman government. Because of the identification of these men with the Roman government, what was considered the imposition of taxes, and, and the extortion and speculation often found among them, they were much despised by the people. Nine times in Scripture the people grouped them with sinners—i.e., "*publicans and sinners*" (Matt 9:10,11; 11:19; Mk 2:15,16; 5:30; 7:34; Lk 15:1). They had no honor among the Jews.

THE PHARISEE PRAYED WITH HIMSELF

" ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. "

HE PRAYED WITH HIMSELF

" The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself . . . "

Other versions read, "*prayed about himself* [footnote, "*to himself*"] NIV "*The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus.*" NRSV "*said to himself these words*" BBE "*prayed about himself with these words,*" CEB

The different versions depict this verse in three different ways.

- ⇒ The man prayed with himself, as opposed to unto God.
- ⇒ The man prayed about himself.
- ⇒ The man prayed within himself, and not out loud.

The first appears to be the proper meaning, emphasizing that his prayer actually rose no higher than himself, not coming before God as a legitimate prayer.

I THANK THEE

" . . . God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican . . . "

This is the prayer of a self-made man, not a God-made man. He saw himself as worthy of God's goodness, as one who, through extraordinary effort, had distinguished himself from all others.

I FAST TWICE A WEEK

" . . . I fast twice in the week . . . "

It is one thing to actually do such things. It is quite another to pray as though that was the basis upon which God received men. Apart from faith, there really is no ground-level distinction between men. The common level of all natural men is, "*all have sinned*" (Rom 3:23; 5:12).

The words "*fast,*" "*fasting,*" or "*fastings*" do not appear in the writings of the Law (Exodus through Deuteronomy). The Law nowhere required that men fast. Later in the history of the Jews, some men proclaimed a fast as they sought the Lord (1 Kgs 21:9,12; 2 Chron 3; Ezra 8:21; Isa 58:5; Jer 36:9; Joel 1:14,15; Jonah 3:5).

Berean Study Bible adds, "I fast twice a week" refers to the belief of the Pharisees that Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Law on a Thursday, and returned with it on a Monday. Thus, to the Pharisees, fasting on those two days is considered to be a special mark of holiness.ö

This being true, the Pharisee thought

the practice commended him to God.

I GIVE TITHES OF ALL THAT I POSSESS

" . . . I give tithes of all that I possess. "

The Law did speak of the tithe, or a tenth: "*And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.*" (Lev 27:30). These tithes were for the support of the Levites, whose total duty was serving the Lord in the Tabernacle and Temple: "*But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*" (Num 18:24). Paul declared that the same principle applied to those who preached the Gospel (1 Cor 9:14), even though he chose to forfeit that right (1 Cor 9:18).

The attitude of the Pharisee was wholly improper, as Jesus will confirm in the parable. It centered in self, and was devoid of faith. This man was not praying at all, but talking with himself.

It ought to be noted that there is a "*form of godliness*" that has nothing whatsoever to do with God. It is totally vain, cannot procure Divine benefits, and is completely devoid of power. All so described are to be avoided (2 Tim 3:1-5).

THE PUBLICAN WOULD NOT LIFT HIS EYES UNTO HEAVEN

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

STANDING AFAR OFF

"And the publican, standing afar off . . ."

He felt unworthy to even approach to the Temple, or draw closer to the house of prayer. Neither, indeed, did this man make his feelings public. He had no pride, and was humbled.

WOULD NOT LIFT HIS EYES TO

HEAVEN

" . . . would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven . . ."

Realizing he was in the presence of Almighty God, the publican could not even look up to heaven. He knew what he was, and he knew his need.

GOD BE MERCIFUL

" . . . but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

The convicted man *"smote upon his breast."* Other versions read, *"was beating his breast,"* ^{NIV} *"beat his chest*

in sorrow" ^{NLT}

Smiting the breast is ^ōAn expression of grief and anguish in view of his sins. It is a sign of grief among almost all nations. ^ō ALBERT BARNES

Here was a man who considered himself unworthy to stand before the Lord. He pled for mercy, because he knew he was a sinner" *"God be merciful to me a sinner."*

Smitten with guilt, he knew that he needed mercy, and begged God to give it. He saw no justification for receiving it, but begged for it anyway.

ONE WAS JUSTIFIED RATHER THAN THE OTHER

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

Jesus is forthright in His conclusion of the circumstances described. He will deliver some words with which the Holy Spirit can work, and those desirous of truth can obtain. This something for us to remember when we speak. Our words can be something the Holy Spirit can work with, or that Satan will use.

THIS MAN WENT DOWN TO HIS HOUSE JUSTIFIED

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other . . ."

The Pharisee's boast was not acknowledged by heaven. It did not move God to be gracious toward him. In fact, it is what he said that kept him from receiving mercy – and he really needed it just as much as that publican.

The state of the publican was changed because of what he confessed, namely that he was a

sinner, and desired for God to be merciful toward him. He provided no explanation for his conduct, nor sought to paint himself better than he really was. While what he was had brought him shame before God, it also brought to him mercy from God – and mercy changed his state. Now he was *"justified."*

EVERYONE THAT EXALTETH HIMSELF SHALL BE ABASED

" . . . for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased . . ."

Here is a Kingdom principle that cannot be successfully violated. Other versions read, *"everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted,"* ^{NASB} *"everyone who makes himself high will be made low and whoever makes himself low will be made high,"* ^{BBE} *"All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up."* ^{CEB}

What the proud man does, the Lord will undo.

HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF SHALL BE EXALTED

" . . . and he that humbleth

himself shall be exalted."

To humble oneself is to insightfully present oneself before the Lord as he actually is. No attempt is made to hide ones unworthiness, or pretend that it is not there. Further, there is no physical posture or activity that will cause a person to be humble before the Lord. True humility may cause a person to assume a certain posture, but the posture will not be the cause of true humility. Humbleness is an attitude, a frame of spirit. It is something that is unseen, being within.

The commitment of God Almighty to exalt those who humble themselves is worthy of extended consideration. Notice, God does not exalt the ones He has abased or humbled. Rather He exalts *"he that humbleth himself."*

Aside from a condemning conscience, God has revealed enough about the fallen nature and status of man to promote an aggressive humbling of oneself. Also, the fact that Christ died because men are sinners should itself be enough to promote a humble stance, and therein seek the mercy and blessing of the Almighty. Having received mercy, serve the Lord!

THEY BROUGHT UNTO HIM INFANTS

"¹⁵ And they brought unto Him also infants, that he would touch them: but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them."

Several segments of time in which the Lord spoke and acted have been reported. The segment of time now being reported commenced at 17:12, when He *"entered into a certain village."* At that time He healed ten lepers, responded to a the question, *"when the kingdom of God should come,"* delivered some salient words about His second coming, spoke of His sufferings, the judgment of that generation by Nineveh and Sodom and Gomorrah, and the final separation of the wicked from the righteous. Then He delivered the parable to teach men that they always should pray, and not to faint, followed by the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

I mention these things to confirm the breadth of the teaching of Jesus, and the variety of questions and subjects that He addressed – all within a relatively short period of time.

The reason He was able to teach in this manner is because everything He spoke about was related – all integrated into something called *"truth."* Further, Jesus did not speak of things unrelated to His mission, of the will of the Father, or the salvation He came to effect.

Men have set some of Christ's words against other of His words. Some have chosen to accept some of them, while they reject the others. However, if what I have said is true—that they are all inter-related – then

such things are unlawful, and evidences of delusion.

THEY BROUGHT INFANTS TO HIM

"And they brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them . . ."

Other versions read *"And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He might touch them,"* ^{NASB} *"People were bringing babies to Jesus so that he would bless them."* ^{CEB}

Notice the wide range of people who came to Jesus for one treason or another. They included scribes (Mk 12:29; Lk 20:1), Pharisees (Matt 19:31; John 3:1; Mk 10:2), Sadducees (Matt 22:23), lawyers (Lk 22:35), publicans and sinners (Matt 9:10; Mk 2:15), the common people (Mk 12:37), a ruler of the synagogue (Lk 8:41), rich men (Lk 19:2), lepers (Lk 17:12), a woman (Matt 9:20; 15:22), a centurion (Matt 8:5), chief priests and elders (Matt 21:23), a sinful woman (Matt 26:7), a father (Mk 9:21), the disciples of John (Matt 9:14), children (Matt 21:15), and a mother (Matt 20:20).

Now *"they were bringing even their babies to Him."* They desired that He touch them, obviously blessing them. O, that people had a mind to do this today!

Infants have no sin as yet – yet they have been born with a sinful nature. It is wise to present them to the Lord for His blessing, praying they would enjoy a quest for the Lord at an early age, and begin seeking the Lord as soon as they are able to engage in an intelligent effort to obtain something. That seems to be the

compelling reason why these people brought their infants to Jesus. Some people wait too long to begin directing their children to the Lord – and some never do engage in such an effort.

All these people (we presume they were the mothers) wanted is for Jesus to touch their infants. Matthew reports, *"Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, AND PRAY"* (Matt 19:13). What a noble desire!

HIS DISCIPLES REBUKED THEM

" . . . but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them. "

Other versions read, *"began rebuking them,"* ^{NASB} *"they sternly ordered them not to do it,"* ^{NRSV} *"they said sharp words to them,"* ^{BBE} and *"they scolded them."* ^{CEB}

Perhaps the disciples rebuked those bringing their infants to Jesus because they considered them to be too young. Or, perhaps they thought it would be an inconvenience to the Lord. Whatever they thought, it was out of order.

While the children themselves did not yet have a desire for the blessing of the Lord, those who brought them did. It is not unusual to have prayer requests for other people, for whom believers are concerned. But what of the infants and little children? How often are there prayer requests for them? How often is the blessing of the Lord sought for them? It is wise to seek for the blessing of the little ones. We have here some people who did this, and the response of the Lord to them.

RECEIVING THE KINGDOM AS A LITTLE CHILD

"¹⁶ But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ Verily I say unto you, Whosoever

shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

JESUS CALLED THEM TO HIM

"But Jesus called them unto Him . . ."

Other versions read, *"Jesus called for them,"* ^{NASB} *"called the children to*

Him," ^{NIV} *"invited them,"* ^{CSB} *"calling them together,"* ^{DOUAY} *"having called them near,"* ^{YLT} *and "called them [the parents] to Him."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Who did Jesus call to Himself? The little children? The parents? His disciples, because of their response to those bringing their children to Jesus? The multitude around Him? I do not doubt that all were involved. The word that Jesus delivered could certainly not be said to be limited to the infants, or to the parents, or to His disciples.

What our Lord says here is of critical importance, as will become apparent.

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN

" . . . and said, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not . . . "

Other versions read, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them"* ^{NIV} and *"Allow the little children to come to Me, and do not hinder them."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Jesus commands His disciples to stop interfering with those who are bringing their children to Him for blessing. The word *"suffer,"* as used here, means *ōlet alone,ō* ^{STRONG'S} *ōto permit, allow, not to hinder,ō* ^{THAYER} *ōlet go, leave in peace, allow.ō* ^{FRIEBERG}

Note, Jesus was not providing for the understanding of the infants, but for them being blessed. He held no special gatherings for children, and there is no record of Him delivering a special word to little children. Yet, He made no provision for their exclusion from the group to whom He was speaking. In fact, we have no record of any sort of little children receiving instruction by anyone other than their parents (Eph 6:4; 2 Tim 3:15).

Of old time, when Jehosaphat stood in the midst of the congregation and prayed to God, it is written, *"And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children"* (2 Chron 20:13). When Ezra prayed as the people were returning to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, *"there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore"* (Ezra 10:1).

I will tell you that this side of glory, there is not an individual who is able to calculate, or even imagine, the effect of a godly assembly, praying, and the preaching of the Word, upon infants and little children. If Jesus is really there, there is benefit for even the infants and little ones. If this is not the case, Jesus would not have spoken as He did.

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD

" . . . for of such is the kingdom of God . . . "

Other versions read, *"the kingdom of God belongs to such as these,"* ^{NASB} *"God's kingdom belongs to people like these children."* ^{CEB}

While believers are not to be children in understanding (1 Cor 14:20), they are to be like children in undoubted acceptance and submission. When children in Israel saw Jesus coming to the Temple, they cried out in the Temple, *"Hosanna to the son of David"* (Matt 21:15). Let little children participate, and so they can do something for the Lord, and they will be blessed – and so will you. However, if you do not permit them to be where Jesus is ministering, you will put them at a decided disadvantage. There is a sanctification that takes place when one is with Jesus – even if such a person is an infant!

WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM AS A LITTLE CHILD

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

Other versions read, *"Whoever does not put himself under the kingdom of God like a little child,"* ^{BBE} *"doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child,"* ^{CEB} and *"whoever does not accept and receive and welcome the kingdom of God like a little child [does]."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

David spoke of a child's characteristic in regards to his own relationship with God Himself: *"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child"* (Psa 131:2).

There are traits that are absent in an infant or little child: John Gill mentions *"prejudice, pride, ambition, and vanity."* There is also the absence of malice opposition, hatred, deviate thinking, and more. On the positive side there is a certain humility, willing dependence, eagerness to be fed, and more. Such traits are to be found in a person if they want to enter the Kingdom of God. The absence of them will exclude one from the Kingdom.

I have noticed this child-like reception of the truth in a number of our brethren. They do not question the truth, are eager to hear and ingest it, and offer no resistance to it. These are not traits intended only for the mature in Christ Jesus, for I have personally witnessed them in new believers, and those who have recently been delivered from unprofitable religious environments. There is no reason for any believer to be otherwise. The grace of God produces such people.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 5/12/17. We will be having our Preaching Festival on 4/28/2017. In our next lesson, we will continue our series in the Gospel of Luke. The fifty-sixth lesson will cover verses 18 thru 34 of the eighteenth chapter: **"INHERITING ETERNAL LIFE, AND JESUS' FUTURE."** A certain ruler addresses Jesus as "Good Master," and asks Him what he should do to inherit eternal life. The Lord asked him why he called Him "good," stating no one is "good" except God. He then told the man that he knew the commandments, and recites the last table of the Law to him. The man responded that he had kept all of those commandments from the time he was a youth. Jesus then told him he lacked one thing, and instructed him to sell all that he had, distribute it to the poor, and follow Him. The man went away sorrowing. Jesus then expounded on obtaining eternal life, and gave some insights on little children. We will begin our meeting at 6:30, which will be followed by a time of refreshments and fellowship.