

'THE REALLY GOOD LIFE!'

(The Life of Christ Series)

Gospel of Luke

'Come Union'

(CBF 'Communion' during 'The Lockdown')

We are currently experiencing an unprecedented global pandemic that has changed everything in our world. Although many people talk about *getting back to normal*, the truth is that a lot of things will probably never be the way they used to be prior to the coronavirus plague prowling the planet or the other biblical maladies coming in these last days before Christ's 2nd coming to fix this broken, sin-cursed world we live in (***Revelation 6***). When Jesus returns, He will rule and reign to cause everything to *get back to normal*, as *normal* was before the *sin-demic-virus* infected humanity and nature *in the beginning* (***Genesis 1-3; Isaiah 11 & 35; Romans 8:18-25***).

Like the *coronavirus* and all last days' sicknesses (***Matthew 24:7, Rev. 6:8, etc.***) before the Savior comes, we don't know how long things will be *unusual* before King Jesus returns to eradicate sin and inoculate the world with righteousness and start the Kingdom of God on earth (***Rev. 21:1-8***). While we wait, Christians must calmly continue their God-given task of hopeful, expectant, godly lifestyles at home, in their church family, and in the world (***Matt. 5:13-16, 1 Peter 4:7-11***). As unprecedented end times conditions rapidly change, disciples of Jesus will have to adapt the way they do things without changing the gospel message or the Word of God on how to live for Christ in these desperate times for planet earth.

In essential things there must be no change – fundamental pillars of Christianity (the Bible as the inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God; the Triunity of God/ one God in 3 distinct and co-equal Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the deity of Jesus Christ; salvation by faith in the sacrifice, burial and resurrection of Christ; and eternal existence of one's immortal soul in either heaven or the Lake of Fire forever). In addition to essential doctrinal beliefs, there are two biblical observances that are precious *ordinances* for Christians which are *believers' baptism* by immersion after personally trusting Christ as Savior (***Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, etc.***) and periodic observance of *the Lord's Table* (communion). Both are important to disciples of the Lord, but neither of these things impart salvation or grace by doing them nor does delay in doing them bring condemnation– they are symbols of the essentials of our faith, but aren't the essentials themselves. We are *saved by faith* not by *symbols of the faith*.

Believer's baptism is a symbolic picture of what disciples have believed about Jesus to be saved – His death and burial (*immersion in water*) and resurrection (*coming up out of the water*). We are commanded to be baptized, not in order to be saved, but as a beautiful public testimony of what saved us. Thus, one is saved by faith in Christ prior to baptism, not by it in any way (***1 Corinthians 1:14-17***). If a believer's baptism is delayed for some reason or even impossible (*death bed conversion, etc.*), his (her) salvation isn't jeopardized because the symbol of their faith is missing (***Mark 16:15-16***).

Similarly, as baptism symbolizes our relationship to God through the Lord Jesus, communion, the Lord's Supper (*or Table*), symbolically pictures the personal fellowship we, the spiritual body of Christ, as a church family have collectively with God through Christ's sacrifice for us. In the local church family, members are visible evidence of Christ's spiritual bride and body fellowshiping and serving together (***Ephesians 5:25-32***).

Communion pictures this fellowship and can be called *communion of the saints*. The partaking of communion isn't actual fellowship, but a beautiful picture of it, as we together remember what Christ did for us individually and collectively. Although many are observing some alternative form of communion at home while the *social distancing* shutdown order is in effect, it does not truly picture a ***'coming together in one place'*** (***1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33***) that the Lord revealed to Apostle Paul should be the way it is to be done (*early church practice - Acts 2:42, 20:7*). Although CBF ordinarily celebrates the *'come-union' table* on the first Sunday of a month, the frequency of the Lord's Table is simply stated: ***"...For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup..."*** (***1 Corinthians 11:25-26***).

It is also notable that other than Apostle Paul's special revelation about communion warnings in **1 Corinthians 11**, there is no other instruction of commands about it in any other of his many epistles. It is hardly mentioned in the Book of Acts of the early church and nothing is written by any of the other New Testament epistle writers (James, Peter, Jude or John). Not that it isn't important, but if it is not an essential to our relationship with God or fellowship with one another it does not seem crucial to invent some substitutionary form of communion while we are not able to do it safely for the same purpose it was meant to picture.

Although it is not a sin to serve home-style miniature communion, it isn't seen in Scripture and therefore CBF isn't condoning service of an alternative of communion at this time and will wait until we can 'communion' together as a church family again hopefully in the near future. The Lord Jesus Christ is still waiting until we all are together with Him for 'the communion supper above' (**Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:17-18, John** - no mention of it at all); so we can wait a little while more until we can meet together in fellowship at the Lord's Table for 'come-union' together at CBF ASAP. **PtL**
(for further discussion, comments or questions please email me at tomlarmore@yahoo.com)

Taking Care of Business (*The Motivational Seminar of Jesus*) **Luke 16:1-13**

Overview: **Luke 16** is best seen as a continuation of the Lord's speech to the crowds following Him, mentioned in *chapter 15:1-2*. As He ministered in nearby Perea a few months before His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus and His disciples, attracted both repentant sinners and religious critics. In parable form, Jesus taught all those following Him how hopelessly lost they truly were and how sincere He was in rescuing them (*the lost & found parables of Luke 15*). The grammar of chapter 16 implies that Christ's teaching seminar continues with words of wisdom to His 12 disciples (and others listening in) about **stewardship**.

In this story, thought to be one of His most enigmatic, Jesus uses a negative activity (vs. 1-8) to teach a positive fact about leadership (vs. 9-13). Although Jesus is speaking directly to the disciples, He is also speaking indirectly to the religious leaders (Pharisees) who are listening. They correctly ascertain that He is also speaking to them and become hostile (**v. 14**). The Lord then applies what He has been teaching to them as bad stewards of God's ministry, who have been fired from their jobs as God's stewards. The further insinuation is that they are misusing their position for their own personal advantage by using religion to take from God's people (like the unjust steward in the parable).

In **chapter 16, verses 16-17** Jesus informs them of the exact time when they were terminated from being God's stewards – when John the baptizer began pointing people to the Person of Jesus instead of religious practices. The official reason for their *firing* by God was their failure to teach the truth of God's Word (v. 17) and for looking the other way in matters of immorality among the people (v. 18). And what was their motivation for being spiritual slackers in their stewardship? The material benefits and personal affluence acquired through misusing God's ministry for personal profit and self-gratification, instead of uncompromising representation of God and the Scriptures. Their basic failure as appointed spiritual stewards of God was that they tried to serve two masters (self gratification & God).

Christ insists that it can't be done. He produces three situations that prove a disciple can't serve God and something or somebody else:

- 1) a ministry example (14-15),
- 2) an authority example (16-17) and
- 3) a relational example (18)

The rest of Chapter 16 is the Lord's most terrifying parable about the eternal consequences end for any who put covetousness for material possession and financial gain above all else in this life; making 'stuff' one's master dooms the covetous soul to a hopeless eternity in Hades (Hell) with nothing.

T.C.B.
The 'It's All About Me' Philosophy
(The Parable of the Unjust but Shrewd Steward)

Severance (do it or lose it)

"He (Jesus) also said to His disciples: 'There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'" 16:1-2

Discuss: Those entrusted with much privilege and responsibility have higher accountability.

Survival (think ahead)

Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.'" 16:3-4

Discuss: The unjust steward resolves to deal with the master's creditors in a way that will settle the accounts to benefit the master and his debtors and ingratiate himself to all of them.

Settlement (get something)

So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' 16:5-7

Discuss: Possibly, the discounted debt was not dishonest if the servant was simply waiving his own commission and/or eliminating exorbitant interest charges for overdue debt (usury).

Shrewdness (not the sin)

So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light." 16:8

Discuss: Christian disciples should be motivated to diligent, creative, shrewd usage of their God-given spiritual gifts, abilities and resources. They should glorify God, benefit others and secure their own current/ future ministry by 'taking care of business' God's way.

T.C.B.
The 'It's All About THEE' Philosophy
(The Policy of Saved & Just Servants)

Shrewdness in planning

"And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home." 16:9

Discuss: Christ's disciples are to invest their time, treasure, and talent in ministry opportunities. Those so blessed by dedicated Christians will be thankful and rejoice in heaven for their stewardship to them.

Smartness with possessions

He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unfaithful also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" 16:10-12

Discuss: Faithfulness in caring for small or lesser ministries prepares us for greater ministry now and in the Kingdom.

Singleness of purpose

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." 16:13

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you." Matt. 6:33

Discuss: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Colossians 3:17