

LESSON 3: JESUS, THE WAY TO A BETTER LIFE

The popular goal of our generation is "the good life". This dream is not new. It has been the desire of every age -- of teachers and philosophers, of kings and common men. But to the truly good life, as to every other good thing, JESUS IS THE WAY.

JESUS CORRECTS MISCONCEPTIONS

The good life is probably summed up best in the word HAPPINESS. Yet, when we think of the good life, we usually think of material prosperity, of pleasure and popularity. This is because we suppose that these are the things that bring happiness. Jesus rejects this supposition. Hear Him: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). "Woe to you who are full! For you shall hunger Woe to you who laugh now! For you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:25-26).

Our own personal observations agree that most wealthy, high-living and famous people are not happy. Yet we continue to seek these things and often are disappointed when Jesus does not provide them. If Jesus offered these as the way to a better life, He would be a failure.

JESUS ROOTS OUT THE PROBLEM

God endowed man with the good life in the very beginning of time. But man lost it when he sinned. With sin came guilt, fear, pain and death. Sin is still the spoiler. Jesus said: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (Mark. 7:21-23). Is it not true that most of the unhappiness you have known is traceable to just such sins as these? It is only in turning from sin that we can hope to find happiness.

"For he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:10-11).

Only by studying the law of Christ can we recognize sin. "... sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Only by following the perfect example of Jesus can we avoid sin. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:21-22).

Imagine a life without guilt, without fear, the anxiety that always attends a life sin! Here, indeed, is peace that passes understanding.

JESUS TEACHES US TO SEEK GOALS

The goal of an unhappy world is earthly treasure. Jesus says: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up

for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20).

Men are eager to receive, but reluctant to give. Jesus says: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Men consider it a symbol of the good life to be served. Jesus says: "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant ... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:26, 28).

The goals the world sets are goals which many can never achieve. Achievement does not insure happiness and those who fail to achieve them are made even more miserable by their failures.

But when our goals are changed, we can be content without those things the world considers essential; they are no longer the things we are seeking. Our contentment and happiness come with attaining our new goals and success in these is within the reach all. All can store up treasure in heaven, all can be servants. If there is any doubt that these do bring happiness, just look at any individual you may know who is actually practicing them.

But, wonder of wonders, there is MORE.

JESUS GIVES WHAT WE DO NOT EXPECT!

Once we learn not to make material things, pleasure and fame our goals, Jesus provides us an unexpected portion of these very things! Hear Him: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33). "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom" (Luke 6:38). "For whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11).

HOW DOES JESUS DO IT?

We may never know all the ways by which the Lord fulfills His promises. But one way is through the sheer wisdom of His instructions. Knowing man as He does and loving man as He does, He asks of us only those things that are good for us; and He forbids only those things that are harmful.

Our health is better when we live the pure life that Jesus teaches. We are better off financially, for we are better workers and we no longer have to pay the expensive cost of sin. Family life is better as we learn to think first of others. And regardless of the problems and troubles we still must face, we face them with Jesus and with the hope of heaven.

Questions for Lesson Three

1. The things that defile a man and make him unclean come out of his _____ (Mark 7:21-23).
2. If one would love life and see good days, he must turn away from _____ (1 Peter 3:10-11).
3. The lawless man, in transgressing God's law commits _____ (1 John 3:4).
4. _____ committed no sin (1 Peter 2:20-21).
5. Treasures on _____ may be destroyed by moth and rust or stolen by thieves. Jesus taught us to lay up treasure in _____ (Matthew 6:19-20).
6. Jesus said that _____ is better than receiving (Acts 20:35).
7. Jesus said one who desires to be great must be a _____ (Matthew 20:26).
8. The _____ worry about what they will eat, drink, and wear. We are taught to seek first God's _____ and _____ and all these things will be supplied (Matthew 6:31-33).
9. If we _____ others will give to us (Luke 6:38).
10. One who humbles himself will be _____ (Luke 14:11).

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