

"Teaching by the Way" Lecture 18

When you hear the title, "The Great Communicator", who comes to your mind? Most of us might think Ronald Reagan. But I propose there was no greater communicator than Jesus. What He communicated will last for eternity, or as Buzz Lightyear in Toy Story would say "to infinity and beyond."

Jesus was moving ever closer to His destiny in Jerusalem where He would fulfill His mission. The Great Communicator taught truths that were as applicable to His audience 2000 years ago as they are to us today.

Although thousands pushed, shoved, trampled to get near Jesus, He knew soon these people would call for His death. And yet His love for them was profound. As He journeyed closer to the events surrounding the cross, Jesus taught His followers to prepare for His return as He was preparing for His departure and He stepped up His warnings about consequences for rejecting Him.

Jesus' warnings, teachings, and parables are for *all* generations, *all* disciples, *all* the undecided - to prepare for Christ's return and I arranged them into three sections:

Words of Warning: critical for those who are unsaved; necessary words for believers too

Words for Discipleship: Jesus taught us the way He wants us to live until He returns

Words of Messiah's Mission: Jesus spoke of His mission while heaven was in view

Have you ever been asked, "Do you want the good news or the bad news?" A wife called her husband at work. He told her he was super busy and could they talk when he got home. His wife said, "Ok, but I just wanted to share some good news and some bad news." The husband was really busy and needed to get off the phone so he said, "Ok, ok, then tell me the good news." The wife answered, "The air bags work great." Let's begin with what some might call, "the bad news"— words of warning. For the unsaved: punishment. Believers: live with eternity in site.

EVERYTHING WILL BE REVEALED

Jesus was preparing His disciples for challenges they would have with the religious leader's hypocritical and corrupting influence. It penetrated society like yeast in dough. The Pharisees secretly plotted to gain prominence for themselves. They thought no one would find out what they were doing. But Jesus said, "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." Luke 12:2. This warning applies to *everyone*. On the Day of Judgment, every thought, deed, whispered secret, private conversation, will be revealed. *The warning? Live knowing everything hidden will be made known.*

BLASPHEMY

Jesus said anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Is it the "unforgiveable" sin?

In Matthew 12 and Mark 3, the Pharisees saw Jesus' miracles and credited His power as coming from Satan, and then *immediately* in those passages, Jesus said those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, as recorded in Matthew and Mark, cannot be committed today. Jesus Christ is not on earth, therefore, no one can personally witness Him perform a miracle and attribute His power to Satan.

However, blasphemy, which is to speak with contempt or to be defiantly irreverent toward God, *can* exist today. Thanks be to God, that in His incomprehensible grace, Jesus said there is forgiveness for this sin. Remember, Peter denied Jesus three times, yet Jesus forgave him.

Unforgivable sin can *also* exist today. This sin is *continued unbelief*. If one persistently rejects the work the Holy Spirit wants to do in them or if they *continually* reject what the Holy Spirit wants to tell them about Jesus, that will be unforgiveable. It is the final rejection of Jesus Christ in total, complete, sustained denial that Jesus is the Son of God.

Scripture is clear: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." John 3:36.

The warning? The choice to continually reject Christ until death, will not be forgiven.

UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS

Jesus taught parables about servants and depending upon the parable, the servants could represent disciples or non-disciples. Using a parable about two types of household servants, Jesus warned that there were degrees of punishment for the unsaved. In the parable, the master, who represented Jesus, was away, to return at an unknown time.

The first servant had been given responsibilities, but he didn't believe his master would return and did not do what was required of him. He abused his authority and abused other servants. In the first-century Israel, this servant likely represented the Jewish religious leaders who failed to rightly instruct the people about God's Law and denied Jesus as Messiah. Yet, this servant represents *all* who have been exposed to the gospel but do not repent and remain in unforgiven sin. For these, their punishment in hell will be the most severe, separated from the God they rejected.

The second unfaithful servant never knew the master's will. He represents an uninformed non-believer; one who is never exposed to the gospel. He will be punished in hell, less severely, but punished nonetheless because Scripture tells us the created world demonstrates the existence of the Creator. Even those who have never heard the Gospel have the opportunity to know God through natural revelation seen in the physical universe. "For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God." Romans 1:20.

The meaning of the parable is indisputable. All who are unsaved, all who do not call upon Jesus to be saved will receive the punishment of hell. Sorry, but there's no touchy-feely way to state that. For those who have heard the gospel and still refuse to call upon the name of Jesus in repentance, their punishment will be far more severe than those who do not know about God.

The warning? Hell is hell. Choose to believe before the Master returns.

REPENT OR PERISH

Jesus engaged in conversations regarding tragedies that cost people their lives. The people around Jesus thought the people died because they were sinners. Twice Jesus warned them that unless they repented they too would perish, meaning spiritually, because all have sinned. Even today, some people believe those who die tragically or experience physical suffering are being punished by God because of sin. Jesus said none of those who died in the two tragedies were innocent of sin nor were any more guilty than anyone else. For, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The wages of sin is death." Romans 3:23; 6:23a.

The warning? Avoid perishing. Repent.

BARREN FIG TREE

Jesus used a parable about a barren fig tree to warn the people they must bear fruit, that is, to call upon Jesus for salvation and live for Him.

If they remain unsaved and do not bear the fruit of salvation, there will come a day that God, the owner of the tree, will say, "Cut down the fruitless tree." There will be no more time. *The warning?* Repent before eternity arrives.

THE NARROW DOOR

Jesus' teaching that there would be some who would not be admitted into the kingdom was revolutionary and shocking. So Jesus was asked, "Just how many *will* be saved?" The Teacher used an illustration about a narrow door to warn of the future without repentance. His response wasn't about how *many* would inhabit the kingdom; it was about *who*.

Jesus is the only door. No one can enter the kingdom any other way than through Him. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6.

Those who think entry will be allowed because they are a "good person" or because they followed someone other than Jesus, will be locked out. The Apostle Paul said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

Entering the narrow door may not be easy. There will be struggles and obstacles in the way. The *world* is an obstacle. The *devil* is an obstacle. And probably the worst obstacle is one's own flesh.

On Judgment Day, there will be those who did not receive Jesus as the Son of God, who will beg for entry and claim to know Him. After all, they heard the gospel at the crusades, watched the 700 Club on TV and even tried out a few churches, but they never put their faith in Him. Once the time to enter has passed, it will be too late. The longer a sinner waits, the more hardened their heart becomes.

Jesus will tell them, "I don't know you. I called you to come, follow me, but you didn't."

This was a shock to His Jewish listeners. They assumed they would be first in line with their E-ticket to heaven, but they will have no entry if they didn't accept Jesus as Messiah. They'll be outside looking in and see the patriarchs of their Jewish faith dining at the Messianic banquet.

It will be bad enough they denied Yeshua as the Messiah, but there will be *Gentiles* dining in there!

Heaven is for real. But so is hell. We all deserve hell. However God, in His mercy and grace, made it possible for everyone to avoid the eternal pain and suffering of hell. "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

Praise God, the misery that will cause grinding of teeth will be unknown in heaven, and there will be no weeping, no wailing, and no tears.

The warning? Jesus is the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven.

DISCERNING SPIRITUAL MATTERS

Jesus had stern words about the importance of discernment in spiritual matters. The people evaluated signs in the sky to know the weather but refused to evaluate the evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. He told them that instead of relying on the hypocritical Pharisees, they needed to consider His claims for themselves.

COURTHOUSE Then He told a parable about the need to reach a settlement with one's accuser. His meaning was, get right with God, the Almighty Judge, before His final judgment, before being sentenced. Sadly, people do whatever they can to stay out of jail but don't apply that same concern to stay out of hell.

God has a case against all of us because we are all sinners. We owe Him for our sin debt but He is offering to settle that debt in full to those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. However, if one does not settle – does not trust in Jesus for salvation - God's prison has no parole and no release for time served. Every sentence He will declare is eternal.

The warning? Evaluate the evidence. The Ultimate Judge will rule.

Jesus wants to fill heaven with redeemed souls and the warnings He taught stressed that those who live without Him on earth, choose to live without Him for eternity. Jesus' teachings were also for those who placed their faith in Him. His "twelve" would face indescribably tough and costly situations. We may not have to face the challenges they faced, but Jesus challenges us to mature in our faith and live each day expecting His return. Let's review His words for discipleship.

DO NOT WORRY

Have you heard that worry is like a rocking chair? It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere. *I'm* a worrier. Worry is common in life, but for the Christian, it's contrary to the faith we're to have in Christ. Worrying about the future and "what-if" scenarios expresses doubt in the Lord's ability to be involved in every situation. Believe me, I'm working on it. Theologian A.W. Tozer said, "Sometimes when we get overwhelmed we forget how big God is." That's me again.

When Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, they left everything. He didn't offer them financial security or creature comforts. No retirement plan. No insurance coverage. No guaranteed provision for the next day. Yet Jesus taught that since God provides for and cares for even birds and flowers, He will most assuredly provide for us because we are far more valuable to Him. He

knows even insignificant details about us, like the number of hairs on our head, including those who are follicly-challenged! Nothing about us escapes God's omniscient attention.

Jesus' sentiments about worry are among the most relevant He ever uttered. He said worry is foolish, it won't change situations and can't add more time to our lives.

Paul said in Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God sent Himself to earth because of His love for us. We must never think little of our importance to Him. Prayer is bringing worries to God. Faith is leaving them there.

FEAR ONLY GOD

One of the most powerful motives in human behavior is the fear of death. There is a natural human impulse to stay alive. Well, *duh!* It brings us to emergency rooms, to call the police, to fire a weapon, to hide, to flee. Jesus told the disciples, don't be afraid of others or circumstances that may take your life. He made it clear the only fear they should have is of God, which means to have reverence for Him, love and worship Him. He alone has power over death.

Evangelist Oswald Chambers said, "The remarkable thing about God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else. If you do not fear God, you fear everything else." God reaches the soul; man can only touch the body.

WITNESS WITHOUT FEAR

Jesus told the disciples not to stress about what they will say in defense of their faith. They'll have the Holy Spirit on their legal team.

"The Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." Luke 12:12.

When we are called upon to give the reason for the hope that is within us, we must remember Christ's promise and we'll have no cause to be afraid. Know Jesus, no fear.

JESUS CAUSES DIVISION

Jesus taught that salvation is free, but often there is a price to pay in following Him. He gives peace to those who trust Him but following Jesus can lead to division between family and friends.

Jesus referred to a prophecy in Micah 7 that says there'll be animosity between fathers, sons, daughters, mothers, daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law; and not just on Thanksgiving. Seriously, there is a spiritual war going on and being loyal to Jesus will divide family members who will stand on opposite sides of the battlefield. A side must be taken though. To remain neutral, is to oppose God.

There can be no neutrality toward Jesus.

SEE HOW THE KINGDOM GROWS

Can you explain what the kingdom of God is? I like scholar Graeme Goldsworthy's definition, "God's people, in God's place, under God's rule." It's the rule of God now and in the future. Jesus explained what the kingdom of God was like using parables.

It's like the tiny mustard seed, barely visible on the tip of your finger. When a mustard seed is planted, it appears dormant for a time then grows to a tree-like height. So too is the kingdom; seemingly dormant but will grow huge. Jesus also compared the kingdom to yeast. Yeast gradually transforms dough from the inside out. So too will the kingdom of God bring about change gradually from inside the hearts of believers.

Although Jesus' kingdom started small, throughout the centuries His domain has spread to cover the whole earth as predicted in Habakkuk 2:14, "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

The kingdom's humble beginnings will produce enormous results.

BE FAITHFUL WITH POSSESSIONS

Jesus taught a parable about pursuing excess wealth for self-gratification, also known as greed. The parable was about a farmer who achieved ever-increasing harvests and built more and more storage to hold it all. He used his wealth for his own self-indulgent pleasures, not to help anyone else. He never involved God, either in guidance for His blessing or in gratitude for it. The man failed to plan for the one, universal, 100%-certain event every person must face: death.

Wealth can be enjoyed and employed at the same time if the goal is to be rich toward God. That means to gratefully acknowledge everything we have comes from Him and try to use it for God's glory and for the good of others.

1 Timothy 6:17 says, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

How tragic when people are rich in this world but poor in the next.

SEEK HIS KINGDOM

Jesus taught if we first seek His kingdom and focus on eternal things, God will delight in giving us not just daily needs on earth but His whole kingdom. If we use our resources to help those in need, we'll get a purse that won't wear out and a bank account no thief can touch because our treasure will be in heaven, where there's a great security system and nothing decays. However, if we regard our earthly possessions as our treasure, then our heart is focused on earth.

God's kingdom is to be the focus of our life.

USE OUR GIFTS

Until heaven, we have things to do. Jesus said, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required;" Luke 12:48c. We're to be faithful stewards with whatever skill or talent we've been blessed with because God is behind it. It doesn't have to be American Idol talent. Painting, cooking, leading Bible studies, sewing, encouraging others, financial abundance, or maybe you're good at just finding ways to help people. We're to use what God has given us to bless others and glorify God. Stewardship isn't just about money. If we want to please God and hear Him say, "Well done good and faithful servant" Matthew 25:23 when we meet Him in heaven, we must faithfully use what He's given us here on earth.

Be a good steward with God's gifts.

BE READY FOR HIS RETURN

Jesus, a genius story-teller, told two parables about being prepared for His return. He commanded His disciples to be ready, like faithful servants waiting for their master to return home. When the master arrives home, and he finds his servants waiting for him at the door, *he will serve them.*

In a second parable, Jesus explained that not everyone will be ready for the master's return.

A burglar arrived unannounced and unexpected to a home and burglarized it. If the home owner knew the burglar was coming, his home wouldn't have been broken into. Well, I can assure you that in all my years as a crime scene investigator, not once did a homeowner tell me the burglar made an appointment to break into his home. Thieves strike at all hours. Homeowners aren't prepared; doors are left unlocked; there's no alarm system; valuables aren't hidden. They are shocked, surprised, sorry. Jesus' point was that we must be prepared for His unexpected return at any time.

Are you prepared for the master's return? If the King of Kings knocked on your door for a visit would you have to yell, "Wait just a minute," while you turn off the questionable TV show or hide a bunch of embarrassing stuff in the closet? Jesus said we should be ready to open the door when He comes and knocks. "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Luke 12:40. Servants who carry out their responsibilities in their master's absence will be rewarded with thrilling responsibilities throughout eternity.

Be ready for the Master's unexpected return.

ACKNOWLEDGED BY GOD

An 8-year-old wrote his pastor about *his* idea of heaven: "Dear Pastor, I would like to go to heaven someday because I know my brother won't be there."

Picture with me that we're in heaven. It's filled with angels of God. More importantly, our Savior, Jesus, is there. Because we placed our faith in Him as the Son of God, Jesus said, "Whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God." Luke 12:8. He will tell God's angels we *belong* to Him! Because we confessed Him on earth, He will confess us in heaven. God is going to be as thrilled to have you with Him in Heaven as you are to be there!

Believers will hear the Son of God's voice say we are His.

Chapter 13 of Luke concluded with Jesus' statements about His mission and His sorrow for His beloved Jerusalem.

WORDS OF MESSIAH'S MISSION

Christ's Fearless Advance to His Goal

Some Pharisees told Jesus that King Herod wanted to kill Him. Jesus used a bit of holy sarcasm in His reply that Herod was a fox, meaning Herod was irrelevant. Jesus boldly stated He would continue His mission with the time He had remaining, defeating demons and healing, both

of which had afflicted the people He loved. He would reach His goal on the third day, referring to His resurrection.

Jesus was gradually moving toward Jerusalem where His earthly ministry would conclude. There He would be betrayed and crucified. The hypocritical religious leaders would kill Him but no one could deter Jesus from accomplishing His Father's mission.

Messiah's Sorrow for Jerusalem

Jesus spoke words of love and sorrow over Jerusalem. The people had been given opportunities to repent and be saved but they refused and with great grief, He knew many would not be in His kingdom. Prophetically, He pronounced judgment against the city that it would be left desolate. That prophesy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when the city and temple were destroyed and its people were scattered.

The passage ends with Jesus' declaration that the people of Jerusalem will welcome Him when He returns as Messiah, and will shout, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." Psalm 118:26.

Christ will return to earth in judgment over those who rejected Him, and His words of warning make it perfectly clear to be ready for life, or for death, in eternity. His teachings were recorded to prepare believers for the challenges we'll face on earth until He returns, but also what reward it will be to hear Him tell His Father we belong to Him!

Until He returns, those of us who know Jesus as Lord and Savior, have responsibilities to live in preparation for His return ". . . to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God." Micah 6:8.

When will Christ return? We probably make God grin playing amateur prophets guessing about that. No matter whether you're a pre-tribulationist, post-tribulationist, amillennialist, a dispensationalist, or like me, have no clue what any of those terms mean, all I know is that Christ is coming back, and with a loud command, with the archangel's voice and a trumpet blast, He will meet us in the air! Let us encourage one another to live in His service, prepared for the glorious day of Jesus' Second Coming.

In this lesson, Jesus taught me that:

God wants me to trust Him and not worry.

God values me immeasurably.

God will hear Jesus confess my name in heaven.

God wants me to prepare for Jesus' return.

In closing, I would like to speak 1 Thessalonians 5:23 over all of you. "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."