

To Seek and To Save the Lost

An Assortment of Sayings

Luke 11:27-36

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Scripture

Jesus concluded his season of ministry in Galilee and “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). During one portion of his journey toward Jerusalem he gave his disciples additional instruction.

Let’s read an assortment of sayings in Luke 11:27-36:

²⁷As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” ²⁸But he said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

²⁹When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ³²The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

³³“No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. ³⁶If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.” (Luke 11:27-36)

Introduction

Are you interested in becoming a vegetarian, but concerned that you might not be able to adjust? Don't worry. You can become a *flexitarian*!

As vegetarianism gains in popularity and increases its market niche, a variation has developed. A *flexitarian* is a person who eats primarily vegetables, but also indulges occasionally in meat.

This designation fits people like 28-year-old Christy Pugh, who says, "I usually eat vegetarian. But I really like sausage."

Christy says, "Sometimes I feel like I'm a bad vegetarian, that I'm not strict enough or good enough. I really like vegetarian food, but I'm just not 100 percent committed."¹

A lack of wholehearted commitment is a struggle for some vegetarians.

And a lack of wholehearted commitment is also a struggle for some professing Christians. Wholehearted commitment is essential to true, vital Christianity. Andrew Murray, the well-known 19th century pastor in South Africa, puts it this way:

The true pupil, say of some great musician or painter, yields his master a wholehearted and unhesitating submission. In practicing the scales or mixing the colors, in the slow and patient study of the elements of his art, he knows that it is wisdom simply and fully to obey. It is this wholehearted surrender to his guidance, this implicit submission to his authority, Christ asks. We come to him asking him to teach us the lost art of obeying God, as he did. . . . The only way of learning to do a thing is to do it. The only way of learning obedience from Christ is to give up your will to him, and to make the doing of his will the one desire and delight of your heart.²

¹ Source: "Are You a 'Flexitarian'?" MSNBC.com, (3-16-04). See

<http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2004/june/15380.html>.

² Andrew Murray, *The School of Obedience* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1898), 52–53.

Jesus wanted people to understand exactly what was involved in being one of his disciples. So, on his journey to Jerusalem he gave an assortment of sayings in which he explained the essentials of discipleship.

Lesson

The analysis of the doctrine of discipleship in Luke 11:27-36 shows us three essential elements of discipleship.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Disciples Obey the Word of God (11:27-28)
2. Disciples Believe the Resurrection of Jesus (11:29-32)
3. Disciples Reflect the Light of Jesus (11:33-36)

I. Disciples Obey the Word of God (11:27-28)

The first essential element of discipleship is that disciples obey the word of God.

At one point in his journey to Jerusalem Jesus cast a demon out of a man who was mute (Luke 11:14). Some people, however, accused him of working by the power of Beelzebul, also known as Satan. Jesus responded masterfully to their accusation. He explained that he worked by the power and authority of God. **As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!"** (11:27). This woman expressed a sentiment that was common in those days, namely, that a mother was blessed by the accomplishments of her son.

But, rather than receive her compliment with thanks, Jesus said, **"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"** (11:28). Jesus did not really contradict the

woman. Instead, he corrected her statement. What was Jesus saying? Jesus agreed that Mary was blessed. However, Mary was blessed because of her *obedience* to Jesus and not because of her *relationship* to Jesus. As Philip Ryken says, “In the end, her most important relationship to Jesus was not as a mother to her son, but as a sinner to her Savior, and a disciple to her Lord.”³

Jesus was teaching that an essential element in discipleship is obedience to the word of God. Disciples obey the word of God fully. They don’t pick and choose which portions of God’s word they will obey. They obey all of God’s word.

Robert Kupferschmid was an 81-year old with no flying experience. However, due to a tragic emergency, he was forced to fly an airplane. On June 17, 1998, he and his 52-year-old pilot friend, Wesley Sickle, were flying from Indianapolis to Muncie, Indiana. During the flight, Wesley Sickle, the pilot, slumped over and died at the controls. The Cessna 172 single-engine plane began to nose-dive and Kupferschmid grabbed the controls. He got on the radio and pleaded for help.

Nearby were two pilots who heard the call. Mount Comfort was the closest airport, and the two pilots gave Kupferschmid a steady stream of instructions of climbing, steering – and the scariest part – landing. The two experienced pilots circled the runway three times before this somewhat frantic and totally inexperienced pilot was ready to attempt the landing.

Emergency vehicles were called out and ready for what seemed like an approaching disaster. Witnesses said the plane’s nose nudged the centerline and bounced a few times before the tail hit the ground. The Cessna ended up in a patch of soggy grass next to the runway. Amazingly, Kupferschmid was not injured.

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, Vol. 1: Chapters 1-12, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 609.

This pilot listened and followed those instructions as if his life depended on it – and it did. Imagine what would happen if Jesus’ disciples listened to and obeyed the word of God with the same earnestness.⁴

The first essential element of discipleship is that disciples obey the word of God.

II. Disciples Believe the Resurrection of Jesus (11:29-32)

The second essential element of discipleship is that disciples believe the resurrection of Jesus.

Luke said that **when the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah”** (11:29).

You may recall that **Jonah** was an Old Testament prophet who was called by God to go and preach to the city of Nineveh. However, Jonah fled from God and bought a ticket on a boat going away from Nineveh. God sent a storm, the sailors threw Jonah into the raging sea, and a great fish swallowed him. Three days later he repented of his sin, the fish vomited him out on to dry land, and Jonah went and preached to the city of Nineveh. Undoubtedly, he told the people of God’s grace in saving him from death and how God would save them too if they also repented of their sin. The people of Nineveh did repent and an amazing revival took place through Jonah’s preaching.

So, what was the **“sign of Jonah”**? Luke did not mention it explicitly, but Matthew did in his Gospel. Matthew recorded Jesus as saying in Matthew 12:40, “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Jesus was referring to his own death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. In the same way that Jonah was en-

⁴ See <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2000/july/12511.html>.

tombed in the belly of the fish, so Jesus would be entombed in the earth for three days and three nights before rising again. So, the **sign of Jonah** is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was teaching that an essential element in discipleship is belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus went on to say that the people of Nineveh would rise up in judgment against the people of Jesus' day because they would not believe the resurrection. And in addition, the queen of the South, who traveled more than a thousand miles to hear King Solomon, would also judge the people. This is how Jesus expressed it in verses 30-32:

For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

What Jesus was saying is that if we do not live in obedience to the word of God and if we do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, the people of Nineveh and the queen of the South will rise up in judgment against us on the Day of Judgment. They will say that we had so much more evidence than they ever did, and we have no excuse whatsoever for not believing and not obeying.

The nominally Jewish writer A. J. Jacobs spent a year working on an unusual experiment: he tried to put into practice everything he read in the Bible. The resulting book was called, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. For example, on Day 62

of his experiment he tried to put into practice the command to stone an adulterer. So he records wandering into Central Park and meeting a mid-70ish man sitting on a park bench. Jacobs told the man, “I’m trying to live by the rules of the Bible. The Ten Commandments, stoning adulterers. . . .” Jacobs records the rest of the conversation:

“You’re stoning adulterers?” the man asks.

“Yeah, I’m stoning adulterers.”

“I’m an adulterer,” the man replies.

“You’re currently an adulterer?”

“Yeah, tonight, tomorrow, yesterday, two weeks from now. You gonna stone me?”

“If I could, yes, that’d be great.”

“I’ll punch you in the face. I’ll send you to the cemetery.”

He is serious. This isn’t a cutesy grumpy old man. This is an angry old man. This is a man with seven decades of hostility behind him. I fish my pebbles from my back pocket.

“I wouldn’t stone you with big stones,” I say. “Just these little guys.” I open my palm to show him the pebbles. He lunges at me, grabbing one out of my hand, then flinging it at my face. It whizzes by my cheek.

I am stunned for a second. I hadn’t expected this grizzled old man to make the first move. But now there is nothing stopping me from retaliating. An eye for an eye. I take one of the remaining pebbles and whip it to his chest. It bounces off.

“I’ll punch you right in the kisser,” he says.

“Well, you really shouldn’t commit adultery.”⁵

This is a humorous and rather ludicrous way of judging others. Believe me, however, on the Day of Judgment, it will not be nearly so humorous. We will have no excuse for not believing the resurrection of Jesus. The people of Nineveh, the queen of the South, and others who have believed in Jesus with far

⁵ A. J. Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man’s Humble Quest to Follow the Bible As Literally As Possible* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 92-93.

less evidence, will rise up in judgment against those who will not believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

The first essential element of discipleship is that disciples obey the word of God and, second, disciples believe the resurrection of Jesus.

III. Disciples Reflect the Light of Jesus (11:33-36)

And the third essential element of discipleship is that disciples reflect the light of Jesus.

Some of the people Jesus was speaking with were demanding a sign. They said that they would believe Jesus if he gave them some convincing sign that he was the Son of God and Savior of sinners. But, Jesus went on to illustrate that the problem was not the need for a sign but, rather, the problem was that they did not believe. Jesus said in verse 33, **“No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.”** He went on to explain what the lamp represented in verse 34, **“Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.”** Then came the warning in verse 35, **“Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.”** A failure to understand the person and work of Jesus is not because Jesus did not give enough evidence about his person and work. No, people fail to understand because there is an *unwillingness* to believe.

Peter Falk (1927-2011) was an actor who spent his career playing a wide range of roles in comedy and drama. Most notably, he played an eccentric, rumped but always triumphant detective in the hit show “Columbo.” In real life Falk had a glass eye, resulting from an operation to remove a cancerous tumor when he was three years old. In spite of his missing eye, he was a high school athlete. In one story he liked to tell, after

being called out at third base during a baseball game, he removed his eye and handed it to the umpire.

“You’ll do better with this,” he said.⁶

The third base umpire did not see correctly, and he might as well have had a glass eye.

People who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of sinners might as well have a glass eye.

But, those who do believe that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of sinners reflect the light of Jesus to the world. Jesus said in verse 36, **“If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.”** Jesus’ disciples obey the word of God, they believe the resurrection of Jesus, and they reflect his light to the world. That is, they live brightly for Jesus.

This past week at the Missions Trips dinner at the church I was deeply touched by the testimony of Brenda, one of our church members. She said that her parents, who live in California and are 73 and 70 respectively, have lived for Jesus for many years. They have been faithful in supporting missions but this was the first time ever that they had gone on a missions trip themselves. Here is what Brenda’s mom said:

We were blessed to be part of the Tampa Bay Missions team. We had a wonderful time getting to know the individuals on the team, from the active adults to the active kids. By Thursday, I felt there was a connection with the kids. (It took me longer than other VBS workers because I was the “new kid.”) Jack enjoyed working with the planter-box crew and hopes that their contribution to the community will reap lasting rewards. May our faithful service to Jesus bring about eternal results.

Hug them all for us!⁷

⁶ Bruce Weber, “Peter Falk, Rumples and Crafty Actor in Television’s ‘Columbo,’ Dies at 83,” *New York Times* (6-24-11).

⁷ I received this as a forwarded text message.

This is what reflecting the light of Jesus looks like. It is living in such a way that “our faithful service to Jesus brings about eternal results.”

The first essential element of discipleship is that disciples obey the word of God; second, disciples believe the resurrection of Jesus; and third, disciples reflect the light of Jesus.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the doctrine of discipleship in Luke 11:27-36, we must examine ourselves to see evidence of these three essential elements in our own lives.

Do we obey the word of God? Do we believe the resurrection of Jesus? And do we reflect the light of Jesus?

Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) was a missionary in India in the first part of the 20th century. She was a truly remarkable person. Just this past week I heard someone say that he had never met anyone who had such a radiant love for Jesus and people. Amy Carmichael obeyed the word of God. She believed the resurrection of Jesus. And she reflected the light of Jesus. She once said, “Certain it is that the reason there is so much shallow living – much talk but little obedience – is that so few are prepared to be, like the pine on the hilltop, alone in the wind for God.”⁸

Don’t worry what others may say or do. You live for Jesus. Obey the word of God. Believe the resurrection of Jesus. And reflect the light of Jesus. Amen.

⁸ See <http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2008/april/8040708.html>.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp
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PRAYER:

Our Father, our Lord Jesus gave an assortment of sayings on one occasion. He taught us that there are at least three essential elements of discipleship.

Help every one of us to obey the word of God, believe the resurrection of Jesus, and reflect the light of Jesus.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!