

October 28

Luke 11 - 13

Christ warns His followers that they will be persecuted. He makes it crystal clear that the key issue will certainly be whether or not an individual acknowledges Christ. *"Whoever acknowledges me before man, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God, and whoever disowns me before man will be disowned by the angels of God." "I haven't come," He said, "to bring peace...but division."*

These words of Jesus are troubling to many in our day because they don't seem to 'fit' our experience. Society is full of people who try very hard to remain 'neutral' on the issue of Christ.

The Pharisees of Jesus' day may have been hypocrites. Some of them were even guilty of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit by knowingly attributing the work of God in Christ to the devil. The Pharisees were dead wrong in their opposition to Christ but at least they knew that there wasn't any neutral ground regarding Jesus. He was either everything that He claimed to be, and therefore the fully divine Son of God and the Lord of their lives, or He was a demon. God or demon, One to be followed or One to be fought - that much they understood, and they had that part right. Tragically, they chose to fight and to proclaim Him a demon even though they knew full well that the evidences pointed squarely in the opposite direction.

Chapter 12 also predicts that following Jesus will bring His disciples into unavoidable and unpleasant conflict with society. That doesn't seem to 'fit' our perceptions in America either. But it is most certainly true. Jesus talks here about being brought into synagogues, before rulers and authorities, and in some of the most uncomfortable words He ever pronounced, He predicts that His disciples will find that their allegiance to Him will often bring them into opposition within their very families.

We are accountable. To the Christians that may be a source of comfort - Jesus clearly meant it to be. The sparrows are all known to God and the very hairs on your head are numbered. But non-Christians are accountable too.

Accountability is also the theme of the Parable of the Servants waiting for the master to return from the wedding banquet, and to the basic idea of accountability, there is added the notion that at a particular time, the absent master will return and call his servants to give account. When we read this parable, we see it as a first reference to the second coming of Christ. And it is not wrong for us to make this application. But when Jesus first spoke these words to the disciples, it was not part of their mental framework. In fact, He had not yet spoken at all to them about a second coming after the resurrection. To them, the point of this parable would simply have been that a time of accountability would unexpectedly arrive.

Here are the words that would have stuck out the most in their minds: *"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who*

*has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."* Certainly the Jews had been given much. They were the chosen people, the recipients of the covenant, the promises, and now the very Son of God Himself. The judgment upon those who reject the Son of God will be stringent indeed. BUT what about us - we have even more revelation, even more truth, so much greater perspective, and free and open access to the Word and works of God at any time we like. What will happen to us if we turn away from the revelation that we have been given?

Accountability is required and some will pay a price for neglecting to respond to Christ, but for the disciples of Christ, there need be no great anxiety - no fear - no worry. If God takes care of ravens and lilies, He will certainly care for us. The key is to not chase after materialistic things that wear out, spoil and rot; and pursue instead, a reassurance that is kept in heaven.

Jesus' healing ministry - particularly His habit of healing people on the Sabbath day - is a point of emphasis. The crippled woman had been bent over for 18 long years. By that time the bones in her spine had probably fused. Then Jesus graciously healed her. It is possible that He called for an exercise of faith on her part, but that isn't what Luke wants us to see. In any case, Jesus took the initiative and did it on the Sabbath, provoking a response from the synagogue ruler.

It's hard for us to believe that anyone could respond in such a callous fashion as the synagogue ruler, but there it is, and Jesus makes no attempt to be gentle in His rebuke. All His opponents, Luke tells us, were humiliated. It is not difficult to understand why, when Jesus posed the question of the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath a little while later in the Pharisee's home, no one responded. They still didn't approve of what He was going to do. Their "interpretation" of the Sabbath law was still more important than acts of mercy that showed the love of God, but they were not about to be humiliated again.

Well that's all for today. Hope you can join us tomorrow as Mark Ashton will present Jesus teaching through the Parables.