

32. Jesus Taught the Importance of Humility

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus chose to show some of His disciples what the kingdom of God would be like. We also saw that Jesus cast a demon out of a boy. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus taught His disciples about some of the important attitudes that needed to be developed in their lives.

Luke 9:46-50 says, “Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.’ Now John answered and said, ‘Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Do not forbid *him*, for he who is not against us is on our side.’” Here, we see that one of the key lessons Jesus had to teach His disciples was humility, as Jesus gave the disciples two different illustrations.

The disciples of Jesus had many attitudes that had to be transformed by Jesus. One day, the disciples had a discussion that became an argument. They were discussing which of them would be the greatest. The word translated “greatest” means *the greatest in value or importance*. Here, we see that Jesus had to deal with the attitude of pride, because they each wanted to be the most important. Mark 9:33-34 says, “Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, ‘What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?’ But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the greatest*.” The disciples showed that they knew their attitude was wrong, because they kept silent when Jesus asked them this question.

However, Jesus knew what was going on in their thoughts. The word translated “child” means *a young child or a little child*. This same word is used in Mark 10:13-14 where we read, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.’” In this case, the disciples thought that the parents should not bother Jesus with their little children. Here, in Luke, Jesus set a little child by Him. He told the disciples that to welcome the little child in His name was to welcome Him and His Father. He said the way to become great is to become the least (humble).

John did not get the point and told Jesus what they had done earlier. He and some of the other disciples had met a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus. They had told him to stop, because he was not one of the disciples. Here, we see the pride of position. John thought the Twelve were greater than others, because they had been chosen by Jesus. Jesus again had to point out the need for humility. Jesus said that the disciples were not to prevent those who were followers of Jesus even though they might not be one of the Twelve. Jesus said that those who are not against Him are for Him. The fact that Jesus said this man was not against Jesus showed that both his teachings and his actions were pleasing to Jesus and that he was for Jesus. The disciples

were not better than others who pleased Jesus.

Jesus and His disciples began traveling toward Jerusalem. Luke 9:51-56 says, “Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save *them*.’ And they went to another village.” Toward evening, Jesus sent some of His disciples into a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for them for a place to stay that night.

The Jews as a whole rejected the Samaritans. In fact, this hatred by most of the Jews was so strong that most of the Jews going between Judea and Galilee would cross the Jordan River and travel on the other side of the river, even though that was a longer trip, to avoid going through Samaria. Many Samaritans reacted to that rejection by disliking the Jews. In this case, we see that the Samaritans refused to let Jesus and His disciples stay in their village for the night, because they were going toward Jerusalem. James and John reacted with great anger to this rejection. The two said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” Here, we see that James and John were ready to destroy this village, because the people did not allow them to stay in their village for the night.

Jesus did not have the same attitude as most of the rest of the Jews. Jesus loved the Samaritans just as much as He loved the Jews and every other group of people. As a result, Jesus answered James and John, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.” The spirit is the inner man. Before we become a Christian, that inner man is totally sinful. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Once we become a Christian, we are given a new nature. As a result, we now have a choice. We can make a natural response or we can make a supernatural response. When we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit, we make a supernatural response. When we act in our own strength, we make a natural response. That is what James and John did when they felt the rejection of the Samaritans. They made a natural response and wanted to get even and destroy.

In contrast, Jesus always made a supernatural response. Jesus explained, “For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save *them*.” Jesus rebuked James and John for their natural response. The word translated “rebuked” means *to admonish or warn a person about their sinful behavior*. Jesus did not come to destroy. Instead, Jesus came to save the lives of mankind. John 10:10 says, “‘The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.’” Christ came to give life and save men’s lives and so He provided an example for the disciples and just went to another village.

Luke 9:57-62 says, “Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, ‘Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of

the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.’ Then He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.’ And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go *and* bid them farewell who are at my house.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’” In these verses, we see that three different people made the choice not to follow Jesus.

The first person said He would follow Jesus wherever He went. Jesus told the person to think about his choice before he made a promise. Then, Jesus told the person that the foxes have holes in the ground where they live. The birds of the air build nests so that they have a home. In contrast, Jesus said that He had no home of His own where He could sleep. Suddenly the person realized that he had to make a choice. He could follow Jesus by faith or he could think about his own needs. Jesus said in 2 Corinthians 5:7, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” The first person chose to depend on the security of the things that he had instead of learning to walk by faith. We never read that this person ever followed Jesus.

Jesus then invited a second person to follow Him. This person said that he would follow Jesus but first he wanted to bury his father. The word translated “first” means *first in time, place or rank*. Luke 21:9 says, “But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end *will* not *come* immediately.” Here, we see that certain things had to happen first before the end could come. This person was really saying that he would follow Jesus when he got old but first he had to wait until his father died so that he could bury him. This was important to this person, because he wanted to receive his inheritance. His concern was for physical things instead of spiritual things. Jesus told the man to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. We never read that this person ever followed Jesus at a later time.

Jesus also invited a third person to follow Him. However, this person also had an excuse about something that he wanted to do first. He basically said that He would follow Jesus later but right now his first priority was to go and say farewell to those who were at his house. This person is like one who says that he will become a Christian at a later time or when he is old. Jesus told that person, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” By personal experience as a boy, I learned that you must plow by looking ahead and not looking back or you will not plow in a straight line. That is a good example of what it means to follow Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus as they go through their life on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.