

## Church of Christ in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Lesson 11

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- 2 Kings 6:8-17
  - The Syrian king was making war against Israel
  - And he set up his camp and his army's camp in a certain location that was not disclosed to Israel – only to the Syrian king's servants
  - But Israel found out the location of the Syrian camp through the man of God (Elisha)
  - And the Syrian king was enraged when his ambush plans did not work out
  - And he demanded to know which of his servants were spies for Israel
    - God is all knowing and all powerful
    - You can see His power displayed here as He is turning the Syrian king against members of his own nation
  - And his servants reply *"None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom."* (vs 12)
    - It is Elisha – he is the one that is telling Israel the things you say even while in your bedroom
    - But it wasn't Elisha, rather God through Elisha
    - God was taking care of Israel at this time
  - This no doubt enrages the Syrian king and he surrounds the city of Dothan – where Elisha and his servant were
  - A great army consisting of horses and chariots surrounded the city by night and Elisha's servant takes notice
    - *"Alas, my master! What shall we do?"* (vs 15)
  - *"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."*
    - There is an entire army surrounding this city
    - Much like Rome surrounded Jerusalem in 68AD just as Jesus said would happen in Matthew 24
    - But if there were any Christians in Jerusalem at this time, this would have been of no alarm to them
    - Because Christ told them to get out when they saw this (Matthew 24:15-16)
    - Those who were faithful to Christ's words would find that the Roman army would leave as Vespasian became the new emperor of Rome only to send his son Titus to finish the job 2 years later, giving the Christians a brief window to get out – and those who were faithful would have gotten out
    - No different than the camp of God's people in Revelation 20:7-10
    - That camp will be surrounded too – but God will provide, God will take care of His people
    - And Elisha assures his servant that God will take care of Israel in this situation as well
  - And Elisha prays to God that his servant's eyes be opened
    - And when God opened his servant's eyes, he saw
    - He saw what God was all about
    - The mountains were full of horses and chariots – but these were not Syrian

- This was the army of God – protecting Israel from the Syrian army
  - Much like Elisha’s servant, sometimes we get lost in the things of this world
    - In the case of Elisha’s servant’s case, for the worse
    - He thought the world was against him
    - And that can be us as well certainly
      - “I don’t have much to eat this week”, “My finances are very low this week”, etc.
      - How will I survive?
    - Sometimes, we can get caught in the things of this world for other reasons
      - “I have so much stuff”, “I am so wealthy”, etc.
      - How can anyone say that I need God – I can take care of myself
  - When we’re in these situations, we need to open our eyes and realize that God is in control
    - Either praise him for your abundance, or trust that He will provide in your time of need
    - Philippians 4:12-13 – *“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*
    - Paul could be content in both situations – because it was not he who provided the strength, even when he was abundant
    - But rather it was Christ who provides strength in all situations
    - If you’ll trust Him
  - Sometimes we need to open our eyes – look past the things of this world because they can be very deceiving
- As a brief recap of our study so far
  - Lessons 1-4: foundational information of the church
    - Christ is the king, the head of the body
    - The church is His kingdom (Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 5)
    - We are servants in Christ’s kingdom (Philippians 2, Mark 10)
    - There is only 1 church (1 Corinthians 1, Ephesians 4)
      - Anything else is really no gospel at all (Galatians 1)
    - And we become a member of the Lord’s church by following His instructions
  - Lessons 5-6: organization of the church
    - The eldership – how they are to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28)
    - The deacons – how they are to serve in the church via assignments given to them by the eldership (Acts 6)
    - The qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of each – not just any person can serve in these roles (1 Timothy 3)
  - Now we are studying the acts of worship of the church
    - Lessons 7-10 – the Lord’s Supper, singing, preaching and teaching the word, prayer
    - And now – giving
- Let’s begin by looking at an example from the greatest gift that mankind can ever receive: Christ

○ **Philippians 2:5-11**

- Christ was equal with God
- But He made Himself of no reputation by coming to this earth in the likeness of men
- He was in heaven (our end goal) and He left that because He knew He had to, else we would have no chance at our end goal (Romans 5:6-8)
- And this sacrificial mindset should be ours as well (vs 5)
- When giving, we should not be thinking of ourselves – but our fellow man
- How we can help them – and if it comes at the detriment of something we want or perhaps even need, then so be it
- Christ took a hit – but it was so that we wouldn't have to (vs 5 – this is to be our mindset)
- Our treasures are not of this world – we're looking to heaven (Matthew 6:19-20)
- If we have to take a hit for the chance that we may be able to bring another soul to Christ, then so be it

○ John 10:15, 18 – *“As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep...No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”*

- Christ willingly laid His life down for us
- He submitted to the Father's will (Matthew 26:39) even though it was His life to lay down – even further knowing that He had at His disposal more than 12 legions of angels (Matthew 26:53)
  - All Christ needed was 1
  - Remember the consequences of God's wrath through 1 angel in the example of Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16:42-50, 1 Corinthians 10:10)
    - The destroyer (1 Corinthians 10:10), the glory of the Lord (Numbers 16:42) appeared at the tabernacle of meeting when Israel complained against Moses and Aaron killed 14,700 in the amount of time that it took Aaron to hastily offer incense
  - Think of the destruction that ~72,000 angels would have caused – they would have wiped out the earth's population
- Christ had this at His disclosure and He didn't use it – rather He laid down His life
  - Out of love (John 15:13 – *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”*)

○ Christ is our example and He gave His all – we need to remember this mindset as we give

- Next: it is a blessing to be able to give

○ **Acts 20:35**

- More words of Christ Himself
- *“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*
- Christ obviously thought so based on the example that we just looked at

- Instead of receiving His own salvation from a cruel death on the cross, He demonstrated His love for us in the fact that He provided us a means of salvation by enduring the cross (Hebrews 12:2)
    - He provided the greatest gift that mankind could ever received
  - Practically speaking, we know this is true as well
    - Consider the Christmas holiday
    - Does it feel better to open a gift or does it feel better to watch someone else open a gift that you got for them
    - Of course, there is no comparison – seeing the joy on someone’s face as the result of a gift that you got them – you cannot put a price on that
- 2 Corinthians 4:18 – *“while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*
  - Giving is a blessing as it reminds us that this world and everything contained therein is temporary
  - Remember, we discussed 2 Kings 6 – we must learn to open our eyes to this truth
    - Just as Elisha’s servant had to open his eyes to see the fact that God will prevail whether we see it or not
  - We must separate carnal desires from spiritual realities
  - There is a God, He is alive, He sent His Son so that we can have redemption, the Holy Spirit made all this known to us, and He is coming back to claim His own
  - All of that is going to happen regardless of your financial state in this life
  - You must look at the eternal things over the things of this world
  - It is a blessing to be reminded of that every week as we give
- Proverbs 30:7-9 – *“Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches – Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, And say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.”*
  - We need to be content with what we have
  - Do not be so caught up in the things of this world, so caught up in chasing after riches that we miss the fact that God is in control
    - 1 Timothy 6:10 – *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*
    - Money itself is not the problem, but rather our attitudes towards it
    - Is that our goal? To get rich in this life? Or to store up for ourselves riches in heaven? (Matthew 6:19-20)
  - In Proverbs 30 we are told: give me just enough
    - Not so much that I don’t think I need God
    - But enough to where I am not tempted to steal
  - It is a blessing to be able to give because it reminds us who is in charge
  - Nebuchadnezzar forgot this in Daniel 4

- He thought that it was by his hands that Babylon had become such a powerful nation
  - One of the big things we can get out of the book of Daniel is that God is in control of nations – Nebuchadnezzar did not realize this
  - And God made him like a beast as a result of his pride
- We must always realize that God is God and allows us to prosper in every way that we do and we are reminded of this in our giving
- Ecclesiastes 1:1-3 & 12:13-14
  - Chasing after the things of this world is vanity – you are chasing after the wind
  - All that matters is that you fear God and keep His commandments – that is our duty
- Next, let's look at when we are to give
  - 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, Acts 2:42-47
    - We are to give on the first day of the week while in the assembly
    - The church in Acts 2 – no one had any physical needs (vs 45)
    - Members of the church provided for one another – they shared with they had
    - And they praised God while doing so (vs 47)
    - Acts 4:32-37 tells us a similar thing – no one in the church lacked anything (Acts 4:34)
      - God takes care of His people
      - A statement reiterated numerous times throughout the Bible and we have an example of it in the early church
    - In 1 Corinthians 16, we are to give as we have been prospered
      - Nobody would argue that we must give all of our possessions
      - As Christians, we still have the responsibility to take care of ourselves and our own physical families
      - But we read here that giving must be planned
      - It must be part of our budgets
      - We should give according to how we've prospered
      - If God has blessed us much, then reflect that in your giving
      - If God has blessed you less fortunately than someone else financially, then still give as you've been prospered
- Next, let's look at how we are to give
  - 2 Corinthians 9:5-11
    - We are to give generously, not as if we are obligated (vs 5)
      - Remember in Exodus 36:1-7, the Israelites were extremely generous in their gifts associated with constructing the sanctuary
      - So much so that Moses had to tell them to stop giving because they had more than enough
      - Now, we can never give too much, but the generosity shown here is admirable
      - We should be generous in our giving



- Israel was not trying God in Malachi 1, they were robbing God
- Just like Cain was in Genesis 4 – God was pleased with Abel’s offering because he offered the first of his flock and their fat (vs 4)
- Cain obviously did not because God did not respect Cain nor his offering (vs 5)
- We must give God our first and our best
- In Haggai 1:1-9, the Jews were once again not giving of their first nor their best
  - They are told twice in these verses to “*Consider your ways!*” (vs 5, 7)
  - If we are not giving God our best and our first, we need to consider our ways
  - God says “My temple needs to be built and you aren’t doing it”
  - And you have no excuse because you live in paneled houses (vs 4)
  - “I (God) have not blessed you because my house is in ruins, while you all preoccupied with your own needs”
  - “*while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” (2 Corinthians 4:18)
  - God was not pleased with this – and He won’t be please with us if we make the same mistake they did
- We are to give because Christ is watching (Luke 21:1-4)
  - Notice in vs 1, Jesus saw what these people were giving – the Scripture seems to suggest that not only did He see, but He was looking
  - God knows what we give – He knows if we can afford to give more, He knows if we can give Him more of our time
  - As evident here – Christ knew this widow only had 2 mites and that she gave it all
  - How did Christ know? Nobody told Him that?
  - Christ knew – and He knows our situation as well
  - This widow’s generosity was approved of Christ
  - He gave His all – we need to give Him our all as well
- We are to give much more than just of our finances (Romans 12:1-2)
  - We are to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to God
  - Do not offer Him a poor sacrifice – remember the Jews were rebuked for not giving their best to God in Malachi and in Haggai – they were told to consider their ways
  - We should consider our ways and give our lives to God
  - Because we will all bow down to Him eventually (Romans 14:11) – why not do so now, so when you do so in eternity, you will be doing so on good terms?
- Let’s continue by looking at some more instructions from Christ in Matthew 6
  - As we’ve stated numerous times up to this point, we must give with the proper attitude
    - When we do charitable deeds, pray, or fast – if we are doing so for our own glory, then enjoy it
    - Because that is the only glory you will receive – God does not approve

- Paul says in Galatians 1:10 – “*For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*”

- Vs 19-21

- A common theme this study has been to fix your mind on things eternal
- Don't be shortsighted and see the armies as Elisha's servant saw in 2 Kings 6, rather see the armies of God that are fighting for you
- This earth has many distractions – but the things herein are temporary
- And the choices you make while you are here will determine your fate in eternity
- Where are your treasures? Are they in the things of this world? A chasing after the wind (Ecclesiastes)?
- Or is your treasure in heaven
- Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also

- Vs 22-34

- We cannot serve both God and money, both God and anything that this world contains – simply cannot do it
- Nor can we claim that God does not provide for us
- God says “food, drink, clothing” – don't worry about that, I'll take care of you
- We just simply need to “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*”
- God will take care of those things
- We must not get consumed with the things of this world and allow them to prevent us from serving God

- Let's conclude this evening by looking at some benefits of giving
- 1 – Giving helps us prioritize
  - As we just discussed in Matthew 6, giving reminds us that we are in need of God
  - And God will provide the necessities of this life
  - So therefore, we have the ability to set our eyes on things eternal
  - Think of how wonderful some of the sights in this life are – the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the mountains, the beaches, etc.
    - If God created those in their beauty in this life, we cannot begin to imagine how wonderful the unseen things are
  - When we give (if done correctly, of course) – we force ourselves to put God ahead of the worldly concerns we face
- 2 – Giving encourages fellowship
  - In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul tells the Corinthians of the churches of Macedonia
  - How they had great trials and afflictions
  - Yet they still gave generously
  - They gave willingly even though they had many reasons not to
  - How encouraging must this have been to the Corinthian church
  - How encouraging is this for us today
  - The church in Acts 4 – nobody needed anything (Acts 4:32)
  - They were of one heart and one soul
  - They watched out for one another



- And we are called to do the same (James 2:15-16)
- 3 – Giving enables kingdom expansion
  - We've already stated how Jesus' ministry was financially supported (Luke 8:1-3)
    - That financial support was certainly not put to waste
  - Similarly for us today, when we give generously as we should – that will help support the efforts of the congregation to preach the word to the community and hopefully bring souls to Christ