

Session 11 Harmony of the Gospels

INTRODUCTION

Verse 1. He was saying to the disciples that there was a certain rich man who had a steward. This steward was reported to be squandering possessions. He called him and said to him, “What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can be steward no longer.”

The steward said to himself, “What shall I do since my master is going to take my job away from me? I’m not strong enough to dig. I’m ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do so that when I’m kicked out of this job, I’ll be received into other people’s homes” (Lk. 16:3-4, paraphrased).

He summoned each one of his master’s debtors. He said to the first one, “How much do you owe my master?”

He said, “100 measures.”

He said, “Take your bill, quickly, and write fifty.”

He went to the other: “How much do you owe?”

“One hundred measures.”

“Write eighty.”

He came back and his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly, or wisely. “For the sons of this age are wiser in relation to their own kind than the sons of light” (Lk. 16:8, paraphrased). Here’s what the guy was doing, if you didn’t get the gist of this. He knew he was going to lose his job and wanted to make buddies with all the debtors. Why? So that when they lost the job, those guys would like him and hire him later. He gave half-priced rates while he had the ability to do that. His master thought it was pretty wise of him. He still fired him, but the guy had a nice foundation for his future because he had a lot of buddies out there who were on the other team, the competition.

JESUS PRAISES THE SHREWDNESS OF THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD

“For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light” (Lk. 16:8). Then He says, “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much” (v. 9-10).

He’s talking about in relation to the people of this generation. The owner didn’t praise him for being crooked, but he praised him because of his wisdom in looking ahead and being resourceful. *Shrewd* means wise and clever. Jesus isn’t telling us to be worldly-minded. He’s saying worldly people plan for the future and do the necessary things to ensure greater blessing in the future while they’re in this world. Worldly people plan for the future, and they use their money to plan for the future. How much more should those with a heavenly citizenship use their money to plan for the future in the heavenly city?

That's what He's getting at. He says worldly people use money because they're looking ahead. All they have is this world. Because they're citizens of this world, the only way they can plan for the future is in this world. Since we aren't citizens of this world, since we're citizens of the eternal world, we ought to use our money to plan ahead also, but in the eternal world. He says if the citizens of the lower world have enough wisdom to plan ahead and plan greater blessing in the world they're a part of, then citizens of the upper world should use the same wisdom to plan ahead and secure blessing in the eternal world, since that's the world they're a part of.

Not all spiritual people have enough wisdom to enrich their wealth in their world in the eternal city. Any man whose only hope is in this world will use his money to plan for the future. We ought to be using the same money, but the problem is this: we don't always believe that we're of a different world.

We ought to be using the same money with the same conviction in our heart that if we can use our money rightly, we can actually see people get saved with our money. That's what He's talking about.

JESUS WANTS THE SAINTS TO USE MONEY TO ENRICH ETERNAL FRIENDSHIPS

“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.” Jesus wants the saints in a similar way to use money to enrich eternal friendships: to use money to bless others now so that they who die before you will await your entrance into the eternal city with gladness. He's referring to those you benefitted with your money while you were upon the earth: the lost souls and the hungry people to whom we minister now with our money will remember that we gave it to help them, and they'll greet us at the gates of heaven with gladness when we go up there.

That's a fact. If you give money and people get saved as a result of your giving, when you go to the eternal city, if they die before you, they'll be waiting for you with gladness in your heart to greet you when you get there.

That's a fact. That's why in my own life I find it relatively easy to give money to the things of God. I'm so convinced that I will see every dime of it again. God will prosper me a lot more in this age, but I'm talking about in the eternal world. Every dime I invest I can turn into eternal gold. It's worth it. It beats saving my money and having a better TV set. I would rather give my money and have something much greater in eternity.

The thing you have to get into your minds is that your money now will bring reward and higher standing in eternity. People will realize in eternity that your money helped feed them or get them saved. They'll remember that in your friendships in eternity. That's pretty heavy, isn't it? If the people of this world can make friends by money, then the people of the eternal world ought to make friends by money in the eternal sense.

That's the message. The only problem is, this concept is so new to us that we've never even thought about it. It's a fact. It really is.

“HE WHO IS FAITHFUL IN WHAT IS LEAST IS FAITHFUL ALSO IN MUCH”

“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in what is much.” He's talking about finances here. He's talking about the man who is faithful to do what God says to do with his money. “And he who is unrighteous with a little will be unrighteous if he's given a lot.”

A lot of people don't really believe that. They believe they can rob God in their giving financially, and that if God gave them a big ministry, they wouldn't rob God with that.

Jesus says, “Whether you believe it or not, if you can’t let go of money, you’ll never let go of pride when the going gets good. If money has a hold on your heart, if I gave you a lot now, you would keep that for yourself even though you don’t think you would.”

WHO WILL RECEIVE YOU WITH GLADNESS IN THE HOUR WHEN MONEY FAILS?

“Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own” (Lk. 16:11-12).

He’s talking about money. “If you, therefore, haven’t been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, then who is going to give true riches and anointing to you?” If you’re struggling with letting go of the buck, you’ll struggle greatly when men start honoring you because you’re anointed. Faithfulness in giving is 100 percent related to God giving you revelation in the Word. That’s a fact. That’s an absolute fact.

That which is another’s is God’s. Your tithes aren’t yours; it’s God’s. God has said it from the beginning. You don’t own it; God does. If you steal that, you won’t have your own heart revelation and your own anointed ministry. God won’t give you that which will be your own. That’s pretty heavy!

In verse 13, He tells you that if you really get committed to God, you’ll hate money, and if you get really committed to money, you’ll end up hating God. There’s no in-between. At the bottom line, you’ll hate one, or despise it, or you’ll hate or despise the other. Because you can’t hang onto money and truly give your heart to God. Why? Because, believe it or not, the two are opposites. That’s what Jesus is teaching. You have to reach the place where you’re using your money to bring in more money for the purpose of glorifying God.

I talked to one guy: “Money is just something I move from here to here to here to here to bring more people benefit. I just push it around. God will give it to me and I can steer where God wants me to put it.”

If you can use money as a means to an end, then God will give you a lot more money because you’ll use it to help a lot more people. I believe when I go to eternity, I’ll run into a lot of people for whom I did things, and they’ll receive me with gladness in the hour that money fails. In other words, when this world is abolished one day and passes away forever, when this system fails, because I didn’t give myself to it and I served other people to the degree that at least I have, I’ll get up there and be received with gladness by many people. So can you. That’s going to be a real event. Isn’t it exciting? Do some meditation on that. That’s really, really good.

THE STORY OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

In verse 19, He tells another story. He was dressed in purple and fine linen, living in splendor every day. There was a certain poor man named Lazarus. This isn’t a parable, by the way. As a rule, parables always make known that they’re parables. Number two, they never use names and speak in terms of being factual.

There was a man who was rich. There was a man named Lazarus. This really happened. Jesus is giving a true story here, OK? Lazarus lay in the gate covered with sores. He longed to be fed by the crumbs falling from the rich man’s table. The dogs came and licked the sores. That really happened.

Well, it came about that the poor man died. He was carried away by angels to Abraham’s bosom. When you die, angels escort you to the eternal world. The rich man died and went to Hades. There he lifted up his eyes, for he

was in torment, and he saw Abraham far away. Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom. He cried out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Lk. 16:24).

I want to say this. Sinners will go to Hades, which is located down in the center of the earth. They're in torment now, but listen: they can see, they can speak, they retain their memories and personalities. They sense heat. They recognize flame. It's just like this world. They're just like we are, but they're down there and they remember everything. He remembered that he had brothers. He knew he was in torment, etc.

ANSWER:

Definitely. Yes. Before Jesus offered up Himself at the cross, there was a compartment for the righteous called "Abraham's bosom." When a righteous man died, he went down into that. That was down in the center of the earth. Across the way is Hades. When Jesus paid the debt of our sin, then He went down to get all those people who were waiting for Him, and in a sense, they all had promissory notes. Salvation hadn't been paid for. They had the promise that one day it would be. They couldn't go into the Father's immediate presence, because sin hadn't been paid for yet. Just lambs and goats were killed. They had promissory notes, waiting in the middle of the earth, in Abraham's bosom, for Jesus to die on the cross. That time when Elijah and Moses appeared, they were down there with them. They came up to tell Jesus that all the saints down there knew what was happening, and they were waiting. All of them were watching this great, glorious event.

When Jesus died on the cross, He descended, took captivity into captivity to Himself, and brought them to the Father. That compartment was destroyed then. From the cross on we go straight into God's presence. All those sinners who die today still go down into Hades. If you read in the very end of Revelation 20, it says that Death and Hades gave up their dead (Rev. 20:12-14). All the sinners in Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire. They're all waiting in Hades right now. They're in great torment. It's going to get a lot worse when they get dumped into the lake of fire. They're waiting for the lake of fire.

There's no Abraham's bosom anymore. Back then it was. That was all they had. I want you to get this. There are really people in the center of the earth. Hades is down there. Tonight there are millions of people screaming and hollering, right now in Hades, waiting to be thrown into hell. Some of them are your friends and family members. That's a very horrible thought, but it's a true thing. Lots and lots of people are down there right now. They're in agony. They're in flame. They know what water is. They're in heat and they want someone to take the pain away from them.

"But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented'" (Lk. 16:25). They could speak. He even recognized Abraham. They all knew each other. Even across the great chasm that's there, they still know each other.

"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us" (Lk. 16:26).

"NEITHER WILL THEY BE PERSUADED THOUGH ONE RISE FROM THE DEAD"

The rich man said, "I beg you . . . father" (Lk. 16:27). It's the right prayer in the wrong place at the wrong time. "For I have five brothers . . . lest they also come to this place of torment" (v. 28). He knew about his brothers.

He even had concern. Imagine that. This guy even cared for his family. It wasn't like he hated them. He was still the same old Joe, the same personality, and he really did care. He had those emotions for his family, even in Hades.

Abraham said, "Well, they can read Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them" (Lk. 16:29, paraphrased)!

He said, "No, Abraham." They even have arguments in hell! "Let someone go. If they come from the dead, they'll repent."

"If they don't listen to the Word of God, they won't repent if someone rises from the dead" (Lk. 16:31, paraphrased).

Miracles awaken men's consciousness to the reality of God. If they have a heart for God, then they'll repent when they see miracles. Miracles cause those without a heart for God to grow harder. Miracles aren't the cure-all. Miracles don't make people repent. Miracles stir people up to the reality of God and they repent a lot faster. There are a lot of people in South County who have a real heart for God. It's a latent thing, a thing with potential. If they see some miracles, if they come to the reality of it, they stir themselves up and come into salvation a lot more quickly.

If someone doesn't have a heart for God, if a man raises someone from the dead, they'll try to kill the man who raised him from the dead like they did Jesus.

FAITH THAT IS STEADILY GROWING WILL ONE DAY MOVE MOUNTAINS

In Luke 17:5, the apostles said to Him, "Lord, increase our faith" (Lk. 17:5, paraphrased).

And the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you" (Lk. 17:6). You would speak to an inanimate object and tell it what to do. Mustard seed faith is a faith that begins small, yet is continually developing. It's continually developing faith that one day grows strong and mature enough to move mountains by speaking to them.

A lot of people think mustard seed faith is faith that's small, because mustard seeds are some of the smallest seeds that they had in Israel. When you planted a mustard seed, it became one of the largest plants. I believe it became the largest plant in Israel. The point is not that if you have real baby faith, everything is going to happen. That's not the point. The point is that if you have baby faith and it grows like a mustard seed does until it gets really big, as long as it steadily grows, one day you'll be able to move the mountain.

A lot of people get that confused, and they think the baby faith is going to do it. "All you need is the baby faith!" No. All you need is the baby faith, and let it exercise, and exercise, and exercise.

Then it will become a giant faith and then you can do what you want with it. The key to the mustard seed is the fact that it starts small but it ends big. It's an encouragement that though your faith is small and pretty ineffective today, it can change. That's the point. As long as it continually develops, you'll be in the money one of these days. Don't misunderstand that.

ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU AN INCREASE OF FAITH

“And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” (Lk. 17:7-10).

We deserve eternal hell. God stooped down and made a covenant with us. Some saints think they’re the hero because they said yes to God. Because they’ve escaped hell, they have kind of a hero complex. They think they’ve really done God a favor! Gratitude for grace that helped your faith grow instead of a pride of accomplishment should always fill the heart of one whose faith grows big and strong like the full-grown mustard seed.

Jesus is talking about a faith that starts small and will grow. When your faith does grow strong, don’t put your shoulders back like, “Look what I’ve done! God had better listen to me now because of my accomplishment.”

No, always be grateful that God has given you an increase of faith. Always be grateful that the Spirit of God has operated and given you a spirit of revelation. Always be grateful for the grace that helped your faith grow. Though you’re bold, you’re always grateful. Though you become great in God, you never have a sense of accomplishment. You always have a sense of gratitude, not self-accomplishment. That’s His point here. A lot of people are going to have a mature, mustard seed faith that has grown till it becomes really big. Even the big miracle-workers say in their heart, “I’m only doing what I should be doing because I’m grateful for salvation.” They should never get cocky with God, is the point.

Too many people think Jesus is talking about the glory of the mustard seed being small. He’s talking about the possibility of it being big. Then He gives a parable that stresses gratitude when it does get big, and not cockiness and self-achievement, as though God owes you the kingdom of God. Because, in a certain sense, the Father owes us nothing.

“THIS SICKNESS IS NOT UNTO DEATH, BUT FOR THE GLORY OF GOD”

John 11 is the story of Lazarus. Everyone knows it. There was a certain man named Lazarus who was sick in Bethany. Bethany was two miles from Jerusalem. This was the village of Mary and her sister Martha. “This was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick” (Jn. 11:2, paraphrased). She hasn’t done that yet; she’ll do it in the next chapter. John is writing this. He’s writing it twenty years after it happened.

The sisters said, “Lord, the one whom You love is sick” (Jn. 11:3, paraphrased). They sent some people to reach Him.

“When Jesus heard that, He said, ‘This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it’” (Jn. 11:4).

It was a sickness that would result in God getting glory rather than in physical death. The devil meant it to result in death, but with the Son of God present, the devil’s evil tactics usually resulted in God getting glorified.

If the devil is wise, he'll quit afflicting people when the sons of God are around and are mature in faith. They always end up losing in the end. The devil made the same mistake in Luke 7 when he killed that widow's son and Jesus was on His way into town. He should have kept his hands off of him, because the whole town got evangelized because of that. I don't know if he's so motivated by death that he forgets how to think. Maybe he sees it, but is so driven by the evil passion he has to kill, even though he knows he's going to lose out in the end. I tell you, if I was the devil, I wouldn't have killed anyone when Jesus was in town. Every time he did, it turned around on him.

A lot of people read this, that it was a sickness for the glory of God. What this means is that it is a sickness that would result in God's glory. A lot of people mix this up in their thinking and they think it's a sickness that God put on the guy so that God would get glory. The devil still put it on him, but it resulted in God's glory. Don't mix that up in your thinking. There's a very fine line. It was a sickness that would result in God's glory. Every sickness results in God's glory if there are sons of God around who are full of faith and obedience.

He was just saying this to His disciples: "Don't worry. This will result in God getting glorified. Don't fret." He wasn't saying, "God put this one on Lazarus so that I would go healing." God never did that. I'm convinced the devil did that.

THE DISCIPLES ARE AMAZED THAT THE LORD IS UNAFRAID OF DEATH

Verse 5. They were special friends of Jesus. "So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. Then after this He said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to Him, 'Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?'" (Jn. 11:6-8).

They left Judea to avoid a showdown with the Pharisees before the perfect timing, which was the Passover coming up in a couple of weeks. In John 10, it describes the attitude of the Pharisees when Jesus left. They were trying to kill Him. Luke 13, they tried to manipulate Jesus into going back to Jerusalem. The Pharisees said, "You had better get out of Perea and go back to Judea. Herod might kill you in Perea" (Lk. 13:31, paraphrased). They were just trying to get Jesus back into Jerusalem to kill him.

The disciples thought Jesus wanted to go back to Judea to begin some new phase of ministry. His disciples said, "You can't go there. They'll kill you there! You know they are." They encouraged Jesus to wait a while and let things settle down.

Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem. They were getting right next to the enemy camp there. They were too close to Jerusalem for safety, as far as the disciples were concerned. "You're not going back there, are You? They're after your neck."

They all knew it. They thought Jesus got really courageous or something and wanted to go back.

"IF ANYONE WALKS IN THE DAY, HE DOES NOT STUMBLE"

Verse 9. "Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him'" (Jn. 11:9-10).

In the natural, it's very, very understandable. If you turned out all the lights in here and I was just walking around without lights, I would probably stumble over something. When the light is gone, you stumble over things in your path. It's obvious in the natural. The light of the day is the same thing as the will of God. Jesus said, "If anyone walks in the day, if he walks in the will of God, then that guy won't stumble."

Both have perfect boundaries and limitations: the daylight in a physical sense, and the will of God. They both end at a certain time. You have to make sure, if you're going to make progress in the natural, that you travel during the day.

THE PERFECT PLACE OF SAFETY IS THE WILL OF GOD

In Jerusalem, in Judea, they didn't have street lights. They didn't have any unnatural lighting. When it got dark, you tripped over rocks and holes in the ground. There are perfect boundaries for the day. There are perfect boundaries in the will of God. If you're going to do something, stay in the will of God. Don't transgress the light and don't transgress the will of God.

Jesus' point was this: if a man walks in God's will, in faith and obedience, he won't stumble. Just as you won't trip if you're walking in the day, neither the devil nor any evil man can stop you or cause you to stumble if you're walking in the will of God. What a great promise of security to one walking in God's will.

"If he walks in the night, he will stumble because the light is not in him."

This is a very serious warning. If you consciously step out of God's will through the unbelief of disobedience, the devil can cause you to stumble.

The disciples said, "You're not going to Judea, are you?"

Then He gives them this little proverb. Here's His point: to stay in Perea, which was safe by all natural senses, was to walk in the dark. It wasn't God's will for Him to stay in Perea. He said, "I know it's safe, but I'm leaving the light and I'm on my own if I stay in Perea."

But going to Judea, which was very unsafe in the natural, was totally safe because He was in the middle of God's will.

It doesn't matter if it looks good or bad; the key is the will of God. You can be in a safe land called Perea. If the will of God is to go elsewhere, you're no longer in a safe land.

There's a famous story about Corrie Ten Boom, and the time her house was bombed. She was scared, and asked her older sister, "Aren't you scared?"

Her sister said, "No, not at all. I'm in the will of God. Nothing can touch me in the will of God."

I don't care if bombs are going off, it can't touch me. The safest place is in the middle of the will of God. Even if you're going back to Judea, if you're in the will of God, you won't stumble. That's a great truth.

“I AM GLAD FOR YOUR SAKES THAT I WAS NOT THERE, SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE”

He says, “Lazarus is asleep. I’ll get there and he will recover.”

They say, “He’s asleep.”

“No, Lazarus is dead. I’m glad for your sakes that I wasn’t there so that you may believe. Let’s go to him” (Jn. 11:15, paraphrased). That’s interesting. This is why I’m telling you, the devil was the one putting this on Lazarus. If Jesus had been there, He would have stopped the oppression against Lazarus before he reached death.

“I’m glad I wasn’t there. I would have cured the fever if I was there. Because I wasn’t there, the devil took it to its logical end and now I have to raise a man from the dead. I know I would have stopped it if I had been there.” Jesus knew His own heart. He knew He would have stopped it. With His buddy Lazarus lying there, with the devil oppressing him, He would have stopped it.

God didn’t put the sickness on him, because Jesus would have stopped it before he died. He certainly wouldn’t have been fighting the will of God. He says He would have stopped it.

“Let’s go to him now. You’ll see a biggy.”

THOMAS: “LET US ALSO GO, THAT WE MAY DIE WITH HIM!”

Lazarus has been dead for four days. It wasn’t like the widow’s son in the city of Nain who died a few hours ago. They had funerals right away. They didn’t have the embalming like we do today.

Thomas tells the others, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (Jn. 11:16).

Jesus says, “No, no, no Thomas. We aren’t going to die.”

Thomas missed the whole proverb about walking in the light. He knew that if they went to Judea, Jesus would get killed. Jesus said, “No, Thomas, you missed the point. If we’re in the light, even if it *is* scary, we won’t stumble. Don’t worry.”

Thomas says, “Let’s just go and die with Jesus. It’s over! Let’s just forget about it and go die with Him.”

I get a kick out of that. He had no comprehension at all that God was protecting him. He was going to be a great leader in the Church. If he went there and died, everyone would lose out.

“LORD, IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER WOULD NOT HAVE DIED”

Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You” (Jn. 11:21-22).

Jesus says, “Your brother will rise again” (Jn. 11:23).

In verse 32, Mary says the exact same words: “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died” (Jn. 11:32). This is the very first statement they make to Jesus. That tells me a little of how they saw Jesus’

ministry. Jesus' close friends all knew He would heal everyone every time. That's the first statement they make. Jesus even admitted He would have healed him in verse 15: "I would have done it if I had been there" (v. 15, paraphrased).

In verse 33, Jesus watched this woman crying. The Jews who came with her were weeping, too. Jesus was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled when He saw Mary crying. And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said, "Lord, come and see" (Jn. 11:34).

"Jesus wept" (Jn. 11:35). A lot of people have theories about why He wept.

I think He saw His good buddy crying and He wept. I don't think He's weeping over unbelief. He saw this woman He loved with all His heart, hysterically weeping, and it moved His heart. Some of us cry when we watch TV shows that aren't even real. It was plain old human compassion. He saw this woman crying and it moved His heart.

I don't know if you've ever seen anyone cry. I've seen someone cry over their little, dead dog, and they were weeping. It choked me up and I don't even like dogs; it just moved my heart. I just think we're better off to not get super theological. Jesus was a man who saw someone crying and it moved His heart to see it. I think that's probably why He wept.

Verse 41. They've removed the stone. Jesus raised His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me" (Jn. 11:41-42).

After He had said these words, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (Jn. 11:43)! This is very important prayer to study. It perfectly fulfills Mark 11:23-24. He requested to the Father that Lazarus be healed instead of the Father requesting it specifically of Him.

I used to always teach people that Jesus was listening to the Father, and the Father said, "Go heal Lazarus" and He went to Bethany to heal Lazarus. The Father didn't tell Jesus to go to Bethany. Jesus asked the Father first. A lot of times we're waiting forever for God to tell us to go heal someone: "Let's wait on the Lord. If God says go heal, I'll heal."

Jesus said, "I requested it of You. I didn't wait for You to tell Me; I'm the One who asked You for the healing."

Some of you have been waiting forever because you never want to step out of the will of God. You want to hear God say, "Go heal someone" first. You won't lay hands on anyone until God tells you first. Jesus didn't wait for God to tell Him; He asked the Father, "I'll go there and do it." He thanked God for hearing, instead of asking again. That's fascinating.

WHATEVER WE ASK IN FAITH, BELIEVING, WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED

In Mark 11:24, it says we must believe that we have received it after we ask. Then we'll receive the manifestation in the natural realm. When you make a request, you have to believe that you've received it, even before it manifests.

When you pray according to the will of God, this is what happens. God releases it in the spiritual realm to you. When you have a prayer request, you pray and God in the spirit realm releases it. He says yes. Heaven says, “Yes; you can have it.” If you believe that it has been released into the spiritual realm and that you’ve received it as far as God having released it in the spiritual realm is concerned, then you’ll eventually receive it in the natural realm.

When I ask God for something and I believe that it’s the will of God, then God shakes His head and says, “Yes, it’s yours.” Heaven releases it—even though it hasn’t manifested in the natural. I know I’ve received it in the spirit realm already.

I say, “Praise God, it’s mine.”

Someone says, “It’s yours? It hasn’t even happened yet.”

“Yes, the Father shook His head and said it’s mine. It’s mine regardless of how long it takes to get here.” You must believe you’ve received it in the spiritual realm or you won’t get it in the natural. You have to believe you have it in the spirit before you receive it in the natural.

There are two different sets of reality. I call it a spiritual mail system. It’s already in the mail and on the way. You have to believe the Father has sent it out and said, “It’s yours.” Mark 11:23 says you must believe that or you won’t get anything.

ANSWER:

Seems that way, but I don’t know. I’m not that good at all this stuff yet. I hesitate to say that. I would keep asking until I believed the Father shook His head. When the Father shakes His head, you don’t have to ask. If you can have that kind of conviction that you’ve asked the request and you’ve sensed the Father say, “Yes, it’s yours,” then you don’t have to ask. If you don’t have that sensation, you need to keep asking God or keep reminding God that the Word of God said it’s yours until you sense the Father saying, “It’s coming.” From that day forward, you believe that you’ve received it, even though you haven’t received it in the natural.

Do you understand that? You believe it’s yours before it’s manifested in the natural. These are some very, very important rules in prayer. We have to study these things and make them a critical part of our thinking. 1 John 5:15 tells us that if we know for certain that God has heard us, then we know that that’s equal to having received it in the spirit realm. If you know God hears you, then you know you’ve received. 1 John 5:15 tells you that if you know the Father shakes His head and says yes, then you’ve received it already. The definition of believing you’ve received it is believing that God heard you and shook His head yes. You don’t wait until it shows up in the natural before you believe you received it. You just wait until God shakes His head and says yes. From that day on, you start thanking Him until it manifests in the natural realm. Read this prayer, because He perfectly demonstrated those principles. The point is that when you know that God shakes His head, before it ever shows up in the natural, you know you’ve received it, and that’s what is necessary if it’s ever going to show up in the natural realm.

ANSWER:

I would say that’s right. Presumption is acting like you’ve received it and you’re not sure God is shaking His head yet. Very good.

ANSWER:

No, you still go through that. Then you have a sense that God has heard you, so it happened immediately. Jesus only did it once. If your faith is strong, it only takes one request. If you're not used to healing, it may take you a little while to believe the Father shook His head.

YOU HAVE TO PRAY RIGHTLY IF YOU WANT RIGHT RESULTS

This is really important, because you have to pray rightly if you want right results. Jesus prayed, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me." He knew He received it in the spirit because He knew God heard Him. John tells us that if we believe God hears us, then we've received what we asked. Mark 11 says you have to believe you received it or you're won't get it. He said, "Father, I thank You that You did hear Me. I knew that You heard Me because You hear Me always."

That makes a very effective prayer life. It's almost like He's apologizing to God: "But God, because of the people I said it again. I haven't forgotten how to pray, but for the sake of the people around Me I said it again. I know that you heard Me and shook your head when I asked it."

We find Jesus thanking God that He heard Him. Jesus, as far as He was concerned, had received the miracle already. Then He stood over the tomb and said, "Lazarus, come forth!" It happened just like that.

I have a feeling I lost a few of you there. You study those few verses: Mark 11, Luke 18, 1 John 5:15, and this passage here in John 11, and you'll get the correlation. Just read them a few times and you'll get the hang of what I'm saying.

"RISE AND GO YOUR WAY. YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL"

Verse 1. Actually we're going through Luke 17, but we're going to skip it there. One verse here—verse 19. This is the story of the ten lepers. They were all Jewish lepers, with one exception: one of them was a Samaritan. Jesus healed them all; the Samaritan came down and gave thanks.

Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine" (Lk. 17:17)? All the Jewish lepers just left the Jewish Messiah; but the foreigner returned. The reason you know they're Jewish is because He told them to go to the priest. No Samaritan had to go to the priest when he was healed of leprosy. "Were none found who turned back to give glory to God except this foreigner? . . . Rise and go your way. Your faith has made you well" (Lk. 17:18-19).

The King James says, "Thy faith hath made thee whole" (Lk. 17:19, KJV). All the others got their leprosy cured, but how many of you have seen a leper? Just one of you. A few of you. When I was in Africa, I saw a number of lepers. They don't have ears, fingers, or a nose. All their skin, everything falls off of them. They don't have toes. Those are the things they lose first: their toes, their fingers, their ears, their nose, and their lips. You can be healed of leprosy and still be in a mess. You can still be without fingers. This man who returned, he received his fingers back. The others didn't get their fingers back. I just thought it was important to point that out. He came back and fell on his face and worshiped God with thanksgiving, and Jesus said, "Good! Because of your faith, you'll be made whole now."

ONLY THROUGH FAITH AND PATIENCE DO WE INHERIT THE PROMISES

Luke 18 is another very important passage on prayer. He was telling them a parable to show them that at all times they ought to pray and not to get discouraged (Lk. 18:1). Jesus knew that oftentimes there was a process of time involved in receiving the manifestation of answered prayer in the natural realm. He knew that sometimes there was a period of a month or two of waiting between the time you asked and the time it showed up in the natural. He knew that this period of time would cause discouragement in some people. He knew that it would cause godly urgency in others. He knew it would cause others to lay hold of God with greater thankfulness, while others would lose heart and give up. Hebrews tells us that through faith and patience you inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12). Patience is a very vital part of praying in faith. Jesus knew we easily get discouraged when we're praying because things don't happen like we think they will.

There was in a certain city a judge who neither feared God nor respected men. And there was a widow who kept begging him, "Give me legal protection from my enemies."

For a while he was unwilling. Afterward he said to himself, "I neither fear God nor respect men, but this widow is bothering me. I'll give her legal protection unless she continually comes to me and wears me out."

GOD WILL AVENGE HIS ELECT WHO CRY TO HIM DAY AND NIGHT

The Lord says, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said" (Lk. 18:6, NASB). This parable isn't designed to give insight into God's reluctance to answer prayer. That's not the point of the parable. Don't read too much into the parable. The point of the parable is to teach the value and the necessity in perseverance in prayer. Don't attribute this to the Father. This isn't a commentary on the Father's nature. Jesus never meant it to be that. Don't take it too far. The point is to tell you the value and the absolute necessity of having perseverance in your prayer life. Don't miss the point and think Jesus was seeking to teach on God's character in this parable. That's not what He was doing.

Verse 7. Here's the point. "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth" (Lk. 18:7-8)? The word *justice* is the same word for *victory*. You can find that in Matthew 12 where the prophet says of Jesus, "The battered reed He will not break off, and the smoldering wick He will not, put out until He leads victory to justice, and in His name the Gentiles will hope" (Mt. 12:20-21, paraphrased).

God will establish victory to the one who continually stays in the place of faith by giving thanks for fulfilling His Word. This person continually reminds God of His Word. That's called "persevering prayer." Day and night he's crying out to God and reminding Him of His Word.

WITH CHRIST IN THE SCHOOL OF PRAYER

Isaiah 62. You have to see this. Do you know what our big problem is? We don't know how to pray. We don't know if we're binding, loosing, asking, waiting. We say, "Lord, we don't know really what we're doing." We have to learn about prayer or we won't be effective. Prayer that's not bearing fruit is prayer that's failing. As a rule, we're all failures in prayer because we haven't learned and haven't been taught how to pray. I'm in the school of prayer right now. I'm asking God for godly wisdom for myself and this body to really lay hold of God to where we get miracles and results constantly.

Instead of getting the answered prayer on the small scale, we need to get big, major answered prayers because we're praying rightly. I don't think it's God's reluctance; I think the Body of Christ doesn't know how to pray rightly. If someone says, "Go pray for two hours," you don't know what to do. "Lord, bless the church. I got that done! Now what to do? Bless me, bless my aunt, bless my uncle, bless the whole world. Bless the nation and the president."

It's been nineteen seconds. Oh, boy! There are fifty-nine minutes to go. "Umm, bless the church... again..."

We don't know what to do when we're praying. That's why I really feel a burden to get this across. I'm exaggerating that to a degree. Some folks have no idea what to do in a fifteen-minute prayer time.

THE WATCHMEN ON THE WALLS WILL NEVER HOLD THEIR PEACE

Look at verse 6 of Isaiah 62. This is one of my favorite verses in all of Isaiah. Does this sound familiar? "I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. 62:6-7).

This is the ministry of an intercessor. He's a person who holds the Word of God up to God and reminds Him of His promises at all times: "God, Your Word said we would heal people when we laid hands on them." We're reminding and thanking God that He will do as His Word said He would. That's what the guy who prays night and day does: he reminds God of what He said night and day.

Look at Isaiah 43:26. What are you supposed to do night and day? Keep asking night and day for the same request? No, you're reminding God of His covenant so that He would give it to you. Jesus said, "Put Me in remembrance. Let us argue our case together. State your cause that you might be proved right. Put Me in remembrance of My Word. Hold My Word up, state your cause; argue your case with Me and prove yourself right" (Isa. 43:26, paraphrased).

I've been going around saying, "God, You made a covenant saying you would heal everyone we laid our hands on. I want to see it happen. Thank God it's going to happen. You have to do it. Thank You!"

I began to thank Him for the grace He has released in heaven. I know He's shaking His head saying, "That's it. Keep reminding Me. You got it." I know I'm receiving it in the spirit. It's just a matter of time before it happens more and more in the natural. I have a real sensation of God saying, "Yes, you're getting it." So I'm receiving it already.

The way I do it is this: I remind Him. You remind Him of His promises and then you thank Him continually. If you're praying for twelve hours a day, that's what you do for twelve hours. All through the book of Isaiah—that's a whole different study—God has promised to pour out His Spirit. You just have to hold up the Word and say, "You said You would pour out a spirit of grace on the people. You have to do it. Thank You that You're not a liar. I can rejoice now because it's as good as done. In the spirit realm, You've already shaken your head. You wrote it in the Word. Grace is coming. Praise God it is finished. Praise God grace is coming. God, give Your grace. Praise the Lord it has to come, because You already said it."

You thank Him and remind Him. That's what you're doing night and day. God says, "When you cry out night and day in this biblical way, will I withhold it from you? No, it will come. It will come in time. It will come speedily."

Plead your case. Make sure you get that.

"NEVERTHELESS, WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES, WILL HE FIND FAITH ON THE EARTH?"

Let's finish the last thing here and we will be done. Verse 8. He will bring about justice for them speedily. "However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

The answer is an unreserved yes. I have two verses. Ephesians 4:13. The Church will be walking in the same maturity that Jesus walked in when He left the earth. Ephesians 5:27. The Holy Ghost described the Church as full of brilliant glory and perfection when Jesus comes. Yes, He will find faith on the earth when He returns.

Verse 10. Two men went into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and said this to himself: "God, I thank thee that I'm not like other people. I'm not a swindler, unjust, adulterer, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I pay tithes of all I get" (Lk. 18:11-12).

The tax collector was standing at some distance away, unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven. Rather, he beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk. 18:13)!

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk. 18:14).

Verse 11 was a self-made man praying to his maker, himself. "Lord, I thank you that I made myself good." He was praying to himself and got nothing accomplished.

Verse 14. The recognition of God's mercy and love as your source of righteousness is essential in prayer. You must recognize that it was God that made you able to pray and gave you righteousness as a gift. It's not because you fast twice a week or any of those things that He hears your prayers. Righteousness was given to you because He had mercy on you, a sinner. To think you deserve any of God's blessings due to your merit is a very serious deception. James 4:6 says, "The spirit of grace will leave you quickly if you have a heart of pride like that" (Js. 4:6, paraphrased). If you go before God with a recognition that you kind of have a little something more than others and you deserve to be heard, you won't be heard.

If you go before God boldly and say, "Because of Jesus, You'll hear me," and then you get bold because of the merits of Jesus, with a humble recognition that it was God's grace that made you that way, then you'll have effectiveness in prayer.