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LAFF OF THE WEEK

"He won't give us another caddy until we bring back the one we lost yesterday."

The Sunday School Lesson

JESUS REBUKES INSINCERITY

Lesson for January 1)

Golden Text—He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.—Luke 11:23.

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE

Approach to the Lesson

We are coming to that section of Luke's Gospel where the rumblings of opposition are rising to a crescendo, and Jesus more and more finds Himself in conflict with the religious leaders. It is not surprising, then, that our lesson portion for this week has a very distinct atmosphere of controversy. It will be well to read from the 14th verse of our chapter (Luke 11) to see how matters developed on this particular occasion. Note especially verse 16, which is the background of our lesson.

A few points should be indicated before we study the spiritual significance of our Lord's statements. First note that He has reference to two Old Testament incidents, the story of Jonah and the story of the Queen of Sheba coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Our Lord's reference to these incidents does not at all convey the impression that He regarded them as anything other than true history. The repentance of the Ninevites was not a legend to Him but a real event which bore heavily upon the destiny of His own generation. The same is true of the Queen of Sheba. She is a historical character who has something to say to the generation to whom Christ came.

Another feature to notice is that Christ did not hesitate to use certain figures of speech more than once. He had used the figure of the lighted candle in the Sermon on the Mount. He used it again in His controversy with His adversaries. It is quite arbitrary and entirely out of place to say that one evangelist or another made a mistake because they reported Christ's use of this metaphor in different situations.

Similarly, we do not need to confuse Christ's address to the Pharisees in our present lesson with His completer denunciation of them in Matthew 23, which apparently came later in His ministry.

Verse by Verse

Luke 11:29—"This is an evil generation: they seek a sign: No sign . . . but the sign of Jonas." This is a reply to the request of verse 16. What "the sign of Jonas" (Jonah) consists of is not given here, but is clearly stated in Matthew 12:40. The death and resurrection of Christ constitute the great sign of His messiahship.

Verse 30—"As Jonas . . . so shall also the Son of man be to this generation." Jonah was a "sign" because of his miraculous deliverance, which was a seal of his being sent by God to the Ninevites. So the resurrection of Christ is the great seal of His witness to the Jews, and to all men.

Verse 31—"The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment . . . for she came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. . . . a greater than Solomon is here." For the story see 1 Kings 10. The trouble to which the Queen of Sheba went in order to benefit from Solomon's wisdom will be a condemnation of the Jews to whom the living Word came and who rejected it.

Verse 32—"The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment . . . for they repented . . . a greater than Jonas is here." The response of the men of Nineveh to the preaching of judgment (Jonah 3:10) will be a condemnation to the Jews who refused the message of life at the lips of the greater Prophet

Verse 33—"No man . . . putteth it . . . under a bushel, but on a candlestick." Our Lord used the figure of the lamps (or candles) on several occasions. Here it should be related to what has gone before. The Jews were not lacking clear, shining light, but were lacking eyes capable of seeing it.

Verse 34—"The light of the body is the eye . . . single . . . full of light . . . evil . . . full of darkness." In Christ the light shines clearly—not hidden under a bushel; but the eyes of the Jews, the passage giving the light access to their hearts, were "evil," so that the way of light was obstructed.

Verse 35—"Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." They boasted of light, but it was in danger of becoming darkness to them because of perversion. There is nothing so dark as perverted light.

Verse 36—". . . no part dark . . . as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light. If the passage for the light is fully open, the whole man will be illumined, the light penetrating into every part. That man is in a happy case, and walks "in the light."

Verse 37—". . . a certain Pharise besought him to dine with him." Preferably, "when he had finished speaking." There is no record of Jesus' refusing an invitation to a meal, unless the one which His disciples had prepared by Sychar's well.

Verse 38—"The Pharisee marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner." The washing referred to was ceremonial and religious. The host was not expecting this breach, and he did not hide his astonishment.

Verse 39—"Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside . . . but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." The ablutions were not for the sake of good hygiene, but were religious rites mostly introduced by the elders and having no authority in the Law of Moses. Punctilious adherence to these traditions had largely taken the place of righteousness. Hence our Lord's stern rebuke.

Verse 40—". . . did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?" Since God is the creator of the inner man as well as of the body, He demands inward purity as well as outward cleanliness.

Verse 41—". . . give alms . . . and, . . . all things are clean." The inward disposition of love which holds all things ready for distribution according to the will of God will itself sanctify the whole outward life. We shall have little worry about clean and unclean.

Verse 42—". . . ye tithe mint . . . and pass over judgment and the love of God . . ." Tithing had also become a matter of religious form and of boasting self-righteousness, while equity and truth, as well as true love for God, were sorely wanting.

Verse 43—"Ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues." Their very religion had become a means of self-aggrandizement. Instead of "glory be to God," it was "glory be to me"!

Verse 44—". . . hypocrites . . . as graves which appear not." The religious pretense of the Pharisees made them like unmarked graves, bringing defilement to those who had contact with them. There is nothing more polluting than hypocrisy.

The Heart of the Lesson

This lesson could well be entitled, An Evil Generation. Several characteristics of that evil generation appear, but while we see those characteristics in that generation of the past, we must not fail to guard against them in our own lives. One thing that marked the people of Christ's day as evil was their insistence on some spectacular sign as validation of Christ's claim to be the Messiah; this, in face of the fact that day by day He was performing works of power and mercy in their midst. Our Lord indicated that only one sign would be given them—one which had been symbolized in the experience of the Prophet Jonah, namely, His death and resurrection.

Our Lord warned this sign-seeking generation that the judgment would find strong witnesses testifying against them — the Ninevites who repented at the preaching of Jonah, and the Queen of Sheba who traveled a long distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The readiness of these to hear the Word of the Lord would testify strongly against those Jews who proudly and stubbornly refused Him who was greater than both Solomon and Jonah.

That evil generation boasted of its light, and indeed, much light had been given it, including now the "light of life" Himself, but the passageway for the light into their souls had been obstructed by their pride, their unbelief, and their hypocrisy, so that while the light beat upon them from without, they were in themselves utterly dark—all the darker for having had the light.

Yet another thing about that evil generation: they were exceedingly insistent upon all the outward forms of religion, but all this was but a covering for inward wickedness and perverseness. They were a good example of certain ones described by Robert Burns in his poem, "The Cotter's Saturday Night:"

"When men display to congregations wide, Devotion's every grace, except the heart!"

The Pharisees were punctilious about the washing of their hands and their cups but forgot the devotion of the heart, with the result that the love of God, equity, and humility were utterly lacking, and those whom they were supposed to lead in the way of righteousness were rather being defiled like men walking over unmarked graves. What a picture of an evil generation! We had better pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23, 24).

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WILL RULE ON SUPREME COURT MARKETING VALIDITY

Attorney - General Roberts said last week that the federal government has agreed to refer Ontario's farm-marketing legislation to the Supreme Court of Canada for a legality ruling.

Mr. Roberts said it is hoped the matter will be heard by the Supreme Court early next year. The announcement followed an Ottawa meeting earlier in the week between Justice Minister Garson and Agriculture Minister Thomas of Ontario.

Mr. Roberts said points concerning the validity of the Ont. Farm Products Marketing Act were discussed. He added that Mr. Garson since then has told him the federal government has agreed to refer the matter to the court subject to approval of the governor-general.

Farm-marketing problems — particularly the validity of existing legislation—were discussed at last October's federal-provincial conference by Premier Frost and Prime Minister St. Laurent.

Ontario's hog-marketing legislation has been challenged by Theodore Parker, a Stratford area farmer, who says that hog-producers wrongfully are compelled to market their hogs through a co-operative.

Buttonville News

(Dec. 22, 1955)

Congratulations to Mrs. Arthur Shenfield on the birth of her first grandchild. Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Grove of Markham are the proud parents of a new son.

Ted and Ellen Gough's small daughter Debbie spent a few days in the Hospital for Sick Children lately, with an abscess on her throat. We are happy that she is progressing nicely and will be back home when you read this.

Recent visitors at the Rodick home were Miss Bremner and Mr. Mitchell, of Toronto, and Mrs. Robert Rodick's nephew, Mr. Thomas MacAllister of Schomberg.

Grace Rodick is home for the Christmas holidays.

On Christmas Sunday, the ladies of the Brown's Corners Church congregation will bring gifts of canned fruit to the church, as a donation to The Victor Home for Girls, Broadview Ave., Toronto.

On Wednesday of last week, The Harmony club of Brown's Corners church catered when M-H Farms entertained a group of 4-H Club members from Dunnville, Ont. A hot luncheon was served in the church parlours.

Velma Miller of Denver, Colorado, is home with her family for the Christmas holidays.

Congratulations to Bob Miller, who has won a $200 bursary at O.A.C., Guelph.

The sympathy of the community is extended to Mrs. G. G. Maynard, Unionville, whose husband died in hospital on Thursday of last week Mr. Maynard served as bank manager in the Can. Bank of Commerce, Unionville, for many years, and was well known to many in this area.

Church Service — Baptisms

As part of a beautiful Christmas service held in Brown's Corners Church last Sunday morning, there were three baby boys christened — the son of Mr. and Mrs. Dean Brumwell, Lee Dean; William George, infant son of Mr. and Mrs. James Powell nee Francis Baker); and the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wilson nee Doreen Stephenson). This baptism was unique, in that Mr. Huston had married each set of parents.

The church was decorated with evergreen boughs and white bows, and a Christmas tree made a bright spot. On the altar was an arrangement of chrysanthemums, placed in memory of Mr. George (Joe) Clayton.

The choir sang two Christmas anthems, "Bethlehem," and "The First Christmas Morn". To complete the service, Rev. A. C. Huston told the story of "The Other Wise Man" At the conclusion of the service the choir presented Mrs. George Clayton with a small gift. Mrs. Clayton is unable to attend regularly as she now lives in Richmond Hill.

Young People of Brown's Corners Church, don't forget the Skating Party scheduled for Dec. 29. Meet at Brown's Corners, Jack Stephenson's Service Station, at 8.00 p.m.

C.G.I.T. Candlelight Service

A service of quiet impressiveness was held at Victoria Sq. church on Sunday evening of this week, when the CGIT conducted their annual candlelight service. Among those who took part were Mary Hooper, who sang verses of "O Holy Night". Choir members were Eleanor McKinney, Joy Fuller, Lynn Arnott, Judy Hord, Marilyn Magee, Betty Patterson, Janet Oakes, Gail Steffler, Cynthia Easton, Janet Craig, Margaret and Patricia Patterson, Carol Russell. Lynn Arnott read a passage of scripture; Betty Patterson and Janet Oakes assisted with the candle-lighting service; Leaders Nancy Spears and Mrs. Huston conducted the ceremony, assisted by Mrs. John Black who led the candlelighting ceremony.

Nelson Boyington—Funeral

The community was saddened last weekend by the passing of Mr. Nelson Boyington who, until last summer, had been a lifelong resident of Buttonville. Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Boyington, Mr. Boyington grew up on the farm which has recently been owned and subdivided by Mr. George Arnold. For many years he operated the service station now owned by B & M Motors, at the corner of Don Mills Rd. and No. 7 highway. Approximately six years ago, the Boyingtons purchased the farm at the south-west corner of Brown's Corners where they remained until last June, when they moved to a farm at Queensville.

Early this autumn, Mr. Boyington was taken ill, and his health worsened rapidly.

Surviving are his widow, the former Estelle Denby; 2 daughters, Mrs. Oliver Bales (Doreen) and Jessie, and one son Jack

The funeral service was held from the parlours of Wright and Taylor, Richmond Hill, with interment at Buttonville cemetery.

Hello World — !

TOGETHER

By Shirley Sargent

As Alice Danforth moved from the sink, she saw the big calendar turned to December and the latent happiness within her swelled like a balloon. She hugged her secret to herself, glad now that she had kept it from Jed. What better way to start the New Year? Of course, if Jed had been here in Weed these last two months, she couldn't have kept it, but he had been gone on sales trips for the company. She walked into the living room to study their wedding portrait taken just three years ago.

Jed's expression was radiant. He was a tall young man with dark hair and warm brown eyes, while Alice, herself, was slight with honey blond hair and a smile that lent beauty to her face. How happy they had been, Alice thought, when they had come to the town of Weed. The first year and the second year. It had been only recently that Jed had exhibited the restlessness that culminated in his transferring to the sales staff.

It had been only recently that Alice had paid particular attention to Weed's snow-covered parks, to its homey schools and its pervading air of "typical" as she walked its broad streets. When they had first come to Weed, she had had little time for anyone but Jed, lately she had treasured every friendly greeting, every evidence of belonging. And soon, she wondered, will my interests narrow down again?

Jed arrived home too late and too exhausted to go to the parties they had been invited to. There were tired lines in his face, especially around his eyes. "Let's just see the New Year in together," he suggested, sprawling on the couch.

Thoughtful Quiet

For a while the living room was broken only by the noises of the crackling fire and the popping corn outside. Alice knew, snow was falling in geometrically beautiful flakes that would heap together and mean shoveling tomorrow.

Jed sat up when she brought the bowl of well-salted, buttered popcorn to him. They sat side by side, sharing the bowl.

"Good!" Jed mumbled, his mouth too full for clear speech.

"How was your trip?" The clock read 11:45.

Jed sighed from deep within him. "All right, considering how green I am at sales. The boss is pleased. In fact —" he paused.

Alice was aware of his intent gaze. "In fact, what?" she questioned.

Jed rose, paced restlessly.

"In fact, the boss is so pleased with my progress that he'll put me out in the field regularly. Now, don't interrupt. Let me finish. We would either move to Chicago or maybe we could buy a house trailer and you could go with me."

Jed poked another log on the fire. "Of course, it wouldn't all be fun and travel, but at least you wouldn't be stuck in Weed anymore."

Not Stuck At All

"Stuck in Weed!" she echoed. "Who said I was stuck? Why, Weed has one of the best stocked libraries I've ever seen in a small town and in the summer we have the band and the people are so friendly."

"But I thought you hated it here." His square face was set in lines of utter bewilderment. "That's why I took the darn job with the sales force."

Church bells began to toll the old year out as Alice went to Jed. "Jed, dear, you couldn't be more mistaken. I love Weed, and our future lies here. A wonderful future. Why, next June we're going to have a baby."

Jed whooped and hugged her tightly, then led her gently to the couch. "A baby! Our daughter or son! In June? Are you sure?"

"Of course, nitwit, and I want him, her, it to grow up in Weed."

"Then I don't have to stay with sales and we can live here and raise our child. Oh, Happy New Year, darling, Happy New Year!"

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