

LESSON 16

Foundations Curriculum

Jesus Proclaimed and Applied the Gospel

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Introduction

Jesus Proclaimed and Applied the Gospel

In this sixteenth lesson, we will understand the difference between preaching the gospel (proclaiming the word of salvation) and applying it in the lives of those who heard and/or believed. Jesus preached to the multitudes in a general way at first (to produce faith), and at other times He was very clear about the conditions for following Him, for entering this kingdom. Many times, He gave clear instructions to those who had heard and demonstrated a desire to change their lives. Let us observe how Jesus did this in practice and examine whether we too have been doing as He commanded.

1) What Is the Difference Between Proclaiming and Applying the Gospel?

At what point did Jesus shift from proclamation to definition?

Many times, when Jesus was proclaiming the gospel to the multitudes, He was teaching general principles to produce faith in the hearts of the hearers; other times, He was applying the Word to people's lives. He applied the teaching to the one who showed genuine interest. This generally occurred with a specific person or group, and in a more private manner.

*“Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,
‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children,
brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.
And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.’”*

Luke 14:25–27 (NKJV)

Important Note:

In the original, the word that appears in the Scriptures is indeed “hate”: it is recorded 43 times in the New Testament, and of those 43 times, 38 refer to “to hate.” A somewhat

startling term to use, is it not? But Jesus uses this word because, in comparison to the love for Him, the other loves we have (which are legitimate) must be completely distant, set aside. It is not possible to compare them.

Let us observe some examples of general proclamation made by Jesus:

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’”

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV)

However, when Jesus applied the Word — when He said “Repent” — here we are dealing with a specific demand, a clear condition.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

Matthew 3:2 (NKJV)

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Matthew 7:13–14 (NKJV)

“Enter by the narrow gate” is a form of definition, of application in the lives of those who truly wanted to follow Him.

2) A Situation of Definition

When Jesus spoke to the rich young man, He was categorical in applying the Word, saying: “Sell whatever you have and give to the poor.”

Let us look at the text in detail:

“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ So, Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

You know the commandments: “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,”

“Do not steal,” “Do not bear false witness,” “Do not defraud,”

“Honor your father and your mother.”” And he answered and said to Him,

‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross,

and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful,

for he had great possessions.”

Mark 10:17–22 (NKJV)

Analyzing the text point by point, that man had a very sincere attitude before Jesus: one of reverence, worship, and respect.

The first reaction of Jesus, however — to the astonishment of those who were there and witnessed the scene — was to reject a flattering approach. He made it clear to that young man that no man on earth was good or could be considered good (not even he himself).

It is worth noting that that rich man did not know that Jesus was God, that he was standing before God Himself incarnate, Creator of all things.

Another thing Jesus made clear — and which serves as an example and a warning to us — is that the flattery He received would not affect His response to the man’s question. He would apply the truth in the same way.

Although it is difficult to reject the praise and affection that people may give us, we must have the same attitude that Jesus had.

What He did there was discern the heart of that man. The text says that “Jesus loved him.” Jesus began by citing the law of Moses, which the man already knew and had even practiced from his youth.

“And Jesus loved him.”

This helps us understand that the application of the gospel is done through love. That man was interested in eternity, which is why he asked what he needed to do to inherit eternal life; and Jesus had an even greater interest in securing eternal life for that young man in that moment.

The rich man showed serious character, an honest life, with respect for the commandments and the law.

Another important observation is that Jesus was not impressed by the man’s “achievements”; He did not praise him: “How wonderful that you keep all these things!”

Jesus pointed out to him what was lacking in his life to be a complete disciple. And pointing out what is lacking does not mean contempt for what he had already attained. That is not it! What that man lacked was to have God above all the riches of the world, to have God enthroned in his heart.

3) Other Forms of Application of the Word That We See in the Scriptures

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” John 14:1

At this moment, Jesus was applying the Word to the disciples to cooperate with their faith. After they received the Holy Spirit, they remembered everything that had been taught and preached by the Master.

Jesus also recalled the application He made to the unbelievers:

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

John 3:19–21 (NKJV)

It was a type of cooperation, of application. The One who convicts man of sin is the Holy Spirit, but the person needs to hear the truth in order to have that confrontation.

The apostles did this abundantly in the book of Acts. There are several accounts of confrontation with the evil lives and works that the unbelievers practiced.

Another type of application was when Jesus called those men to follow Him, to be His disciples:

“And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” **Matthew 4:19**

Jesus spoke to men who were working by the seashore; all of them were part of a fishing industry. It was an application similar to what He did with the rich man. He defined them.

“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.’”

Luke 9:57–62 (NKJV)

In this account we see three different applications:

The man was enthusiastic about following Jesus, but Jesus told him that He “had nowhere to lay His head.” This definition was to prevent the seed from falling among the thorns (as in the parable of Matthew 13).

In the other case, the man argued: “Let me first...” Jesus did not take this response lightly. He said: “Let the dead bury their own dead.” If Jesus spoke such a word today, He might be called insane by the Church itself. The preaching of the kingdom is above all things: Go and preach the Kingdom of God!

Another said to Him: “Let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” The error of this request was serious in Jesus’ eyes: He read the condition of that man. No one who has put his hand to the plow (the Kingdom of God) can look back. When a person says “Let me first,” it is the same as looking back. The man was setting the conditions for going after Jesus, when it is the opposite: He sets the conditions, and we obey.

The preaching of Jesus says that He must be the priority in our hearts, our lives.

When Jesus arrived at the tax collector’s booth, He said to Matthew: “Follow Me!” The text records that Matthew left everything behind and went with Him... He left his work, his income, his position, his priorities... He did the opposite of the rich man.

4) The Result of the Clear Application of the Gospel

After the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples no longer had troubled, confused hearts.

Hundreds of people who heard the preaching understood that their works were evil and that some kind of decision was necessary.

All the disciples showed a radical conversion.

As for the rich man of Mark 10, he too was defined: the text says he went away sorrowful, and probably convicted that he did not love God above all things... He became aware of his condition.

There are scholars who say that this man was Joseph of Arimathea. If this is indeed true, we see later that he became a sincere disciple of Jesus.

A PRINCIPLE:

If your life is not in agreement with these words of Jesus, consider them seriously now. If you need to evaluate and make your life radical as many have done, do it! Review these truths in your life. And when you go to preach, consider that if the gospel is not taught and applied in the correct way, it will not be you facilitating the entrance of people into the Kingdom of God that will resolve the wrong condition of any sinner. This is a grave decision in the lives of people: eternal life or eternal perdition.

CONCLUSION

In this sixteenth lesson of the Foundations Curriculum, we examined the difference between proclaiming the Word and applying it. We saw the different approaches Jesus used and how He was clear and incisive in the application to all those who came “after Him.” Jesus never embellished the gospel to gain more followers; on the contrary, He preached to the multitudes and also applied a word of definition to those who heard. It is important to discern whether we are living the gospel the way Jesus presented it and whether we are applying it in our lives and in the lives of others in the right way.

CONSIDER CAREFULLY

01 Do you remember situations in your life when you were confronted with the application of the gospel and had to make decisions that involved forsaking everything and everyone?

02 Do you maintain to this day the attitude that was required of you by God?

03 When you preach, do you include application as Jesus did, or do you tend to “soften” the message?

*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*

Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV)