

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

“THE CHURCH IS A FASHION SHOW”

This week we will study further in depth the “Fairytale of the Church – The Church is a Fashion Show”. We will look at different Scriptures, which combat this lie. Hopefully, we will discover within ourselves how we have been more concerned about image than being transparent with God and with others. May we walk together away from the fairytale and closer to the Truth, our Lord Jesus Christ.



Today's Scripture:
Luke 18:18-30

The Word

¹⁸A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁹"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ²⁰You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother. ²¹"All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. ²²When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²³When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. ²⁴Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁶Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁷Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." ²⁸Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" ²⁹"I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

Verse 18: This ruler, who was a young man, had it all. He was probably dressed in the latest Hebrew fashions. People noticed him as he walked by. We can see in this verse that he was confident enough to approach Jesus in a crowd. He wanted Jesus to answer a question. So, he asks, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Despite his wealth and prestige, he knows something in his life is missing. He just didn’t realize that the answer was standing right in front of him.

Verse 19: “What?”, you may ask. Jesus, You are God, what are you saying? Jesus here is confronting the ruler’s view of him. The ruler called Jesus a “good teacher”. Jesus was going directly to the heart of the ruler. This rich man only saw Jesus as a teacher, not as God. The young man just thought he was getting advice from a smart guy. Jesus never claimed to be a smart guy. He called Himself equal to God. We cannot choose the title for Jesus. We either believe Him or we don’t. This ruler was trying to play both sides. Jesus cuts down the fence that the young ruler was trying to stand on.

Verse 20-21: This ruler had done all the “right” things. A mama would be very glad to see her daughter bring this guy to dinner. His outward actions looked good. Yet, he was missing what was most important.

Verse 22: “Get rid of you large screen television, your massive shoe collection, your expensive jewelry. And, you know that Porsche camel that’s parked outside your tent? Get rid of that also. That’s right have a huge garage sale, and then give all of the proceeds to Goodwill. And then, after you leave your life of luxury, then, come follow me, as I trod around in the desert.” What would you do? The Word shows us the ruler’s reaction.

Verse 23: Sadness. The thought of letting go of all of earth’s “stuff” was just too much. He wanted eternal life, but he didn’t want to sacrifice anything for it. Yet, he was looking at the One who left the riches of Heaven and the continual worship by angels to come live on earth. In a short time, Jesus would sacrifice His very life in order to extend eternal life to everyone. But, the rich ruler wanted to look good now. He wanted the comforts of the earth, even if it cost him Heaven. Unfortunately, this still happens today.

Verse 24-25: In a nation which consumes 95% of the world’s resources, who can be saved? In a land where we feel cheated if our Supersized fries are cold, who can be saved? In a country where most homes have a car, television, and computer, who can be saved? In a place where what you have and how you look supposedly defines the person, who can be saved?

Verse 26-27: It is possible, but only by God.

Application

Bible study in itself does not produce change in our lives. We need to be willing to apply what we learn. Pray before you begin this section. Ask the Spirit to teach you right now. Be willing to listen.

What things or people do you hold onto and prioritize over God?

What keeps you hanging onto this world?

How can you let go of the world and grasp eternal life now?

Who can you ask to hold you up in prayer on this issue?



Today's Scripture:
Acts 5:1-11

The Word

Image is sometimes created when we compare ourselves to others. There are tragic consequences when we care more about what others think about us than God Himself. Today, we will see a couple pay the ultimate price for envying others.

¹Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. ²With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. ³Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." ⁵When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. ⁶Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. ⁷About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." ⁹Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." ¹⁰At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

It seems like a weird horror flick! The Word of God can be more shocking than anything we can imagine. Let's find out how these verses can teach us about ourselves.

Verse 1: What does it mean that they also sold property? We need to go back to Acts 4:36-37.

³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Barnabas sold land and gave all the money to the church. Obviously Annanias and Sapphira had heard about it. They must have seen the fuss made over Barnabas' generous act and they wanted some of the praise heading their way. So they devised a scheme.

Verse 2: Deception. The plot is already thickening, and we have barely begun the story. They sold property and then pretended to give the entire profit to the Lord! But, they didn't get away with it.

Verse 3-4: Ananias was not wrong in keeping the money. It was his and he could do with it as he pleased. What was wrong was that he pretended to give all of it like Barnabas. He put on a big show for others so they would be impressed with him. The impression he left was not the one he had planned.

Verse 5-6: Ananias was not the only one who suffered with an image problem.

Verse 7-10: This couple is not remembered the way they desired. They became legacies in a negative way. It all started with the root of comparison and it blossomed into death. How did it go so wrong? First, their eyes were on what others were doing, not God. Second, they had no accountability. Sapphira never told her husband that his plan was wrong. Both kept their plan a secret so no one could confront their sin. Sadly, it was brought into the open when it was too late. Third, their hearts were calloused against sin. They desired to "outdo" Barnabas so badly, that they did not care who they stepped on even if it was God! The Lord had to take drastic measures to ensure His brand new family, the church, did not consider lying to the Spirit a light matter. I think the church got it.

Verse 11: Will that fear seize us today? Will we honor God and obey Him instead of deceiving others into thinking better of us? That means no more exaggerating success of ourselves or our families. Instead, let's be honest with one another.

Application

All of Scripture teaches us. Pray to God and ask Him to show you what He desires for you to learn from this tragic story.

Why is envy so destructive?

What are ways we try to show off to others?

Why do you think this sin was judged so harshly?

How can we be more real with others and less about image?



Today's Scripture:
Luke 22:24-27

The Word

The verses we will study today are convicting. Please spend time in prayer before you begin. Ask God to speak to you through His Word. Be willing to listen, even if it is hard.

²⁴Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

These verses sum up worldly thought versus Godly thought. They show the extreme difference between living for the "here and now" versus living for "the hereafter". Let us begin with the temporal train of thought.

Verse 24: Let me set the scene for you. This is during the Last Supper. It is called, "The Lord's Supper" due to the fact that this is the last time Jesus would eat with His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion. Jesus knew all that. He was getting ready to suffer betrayal, torture, injustice, death. In the last few hours of freedom, He wanted to be near His disciples, His friends, His brothers, the very men He was willing to die for. In the midst of this poignant scene, what are the disciples doing? Are they worshipping

Jesus? No. Encouraging one another? Serving others? No. They are arguing about who is the greatest! They are in the room with God Himself, yet they are debating if a fisherman, like Peter, is better than a tax collector, like Matthew. In the midst of this chaos, Jesus breaks in with the Heavenly point of view.

Verse 25-27: We do anything we can to get ahead in the corporate world. The title CEO holds prestige and honor. The media gloats over Hollywood stars. The rich, or those whose houses are huge, who have expensive cars and jewelry, and who have paid staff taking care of their every need are idolized. We think “making it” is when we are at the top looking down at others. Yet, Jesus paints a different view of success. He calls us to be servants. We need to be looking up to others and pondering ways to help them, not to use them, or bring them down. A definition for servant in the Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary explains the occupation as, “One under another’s authority.” That just sends chills up most people’s spines. In a nation where everyone wants to be the boss and “no one tells me what to do”, how can we be servants? We must quit arguing amongst ourselves about who is the greatest. None of us are. We must place our thoughts on Christ. He was the ruler of the universe (no CEO can claim that), yet he, “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8) We need to follow the ways of Heaven and humble ourselves. Only then can we experience greatness from God’s point of view.

Application

We often view the disciples as superhuman. We forget that they model ourselves. These men struggled just as we do. We can learn from their victories, but we can also learn from their defeats.

How does America define greatness? How does God define it?

Define humility.

How do we humble ourselves?

Why is humility so difficult?



Today's Scripture:
The Book of Ecclesiastes

The Word

King Solomon had it all. In fact, no one in all of history can even be compared to this man who was the King of Israel thousands of years before the truth of Christ was revealed. Everything he had was given to him by God. In fact, the Lord says to him..."I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings." (1 Kings 3:12-13) Solomon literally was in a league of his own. He may have had the original version of M.C. Hammer's song, "Can't Touch This". Yet, in a book that he most likely authored, Ecclesiastes, we see that all he had was meaningless to him. Our study today will scan the first two chapters in the book of Ecclesiastes, which is in the Old Testament, just after the book of Proverbs. This short book reminds us of how temporary life on earth is.

Chapter 1-2: What a way to begin. This was Solomon's summary on life. All of what the world claimed would make him happy left him empty. He pursued everything possible, yet everything left Solomon with the same answer: Meaningless. So, what had he pursued?

Work: Ecclesiastes 1:3-5

³ What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? ⁴ Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. ⁵ The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

Wisdom: Ecclesiastes 1:13, 16-18

¹³ I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!

¹⁶ I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." ¹⁷ Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸ For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.

Pleasure: Ecclesiastes 2:1-2

¹ I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. ² "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"

Drunkenness: Ecclesiastes 2:3

³ I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

Building Projects: Ecclesiastes 2:4-5

⁴ I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. ⁵ I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

Accumulated Wealth: Ecclesiastes 2:8a

⁸ I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces.

Promiscuity: Ecclesiastes 2:8b

I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man.

Greatness: Ecclesiastes 2:9

⁹ I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

Pleasure: Ecclesiastes 2:10

¹⁰ I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

His Conclusion: Ecclesiastes 2:11

¹¹ Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Solomon indulged in everything the world had to offer. These are what we are told to pursue today. Advertisers tell us that we need these things to be better than what we are. Sometimes even in the church we falsely equate running after pleasures and prestige to the blessing of God. Yes, God gives us gifts, but we are to pursue Him, not the objects He created.

Application

Solomon's life had such a tragic ending. His pursuit of the world left him with nothing but a meaningless existence. In order to escape the trap that ensnared Solomon, we must be willing to be honest with God and ourselves.

What messages are given by the world concerning what to pursue in life?

What do you pursue in this world?

How can you avoid being caught in the above mentioned worldly pursuit?

What do you think about Solomon's summary of life as "meaningless"?

How can we reach out to others who feel like their life is meaningless?



Today's Scripture:
The Book of Ruth

The Word

We have studied this week different people who were more concerned about this world than Heaven. They each walked across our page with different "fashions". The rich young ruler was wearing temporal riches. Ananias and Sapphira showcased comparison to others and desires for accolades from people not God, the disciples all walked down the runway with arguments of greatness. And, who could forget Solomon, decked out with every pursuit of pleasure and image possible?

Today we will study someone who has her priorities straight. She is not concerned what others think about her, she just does what is right. She humbles herself to a servant and receives rewards. She recognizes her low position and is amazed by any kindness shown to her. She pursues helping others, and in the end, she receives honor from those she helped. Who is she? Her name is Ruth. What is so surprising about her is that she is a foreigner, a Moabite. Everyone else we studied this week were "people of God". They should have known better. Yet, this woman, raised in a land that worshipped idols, comes to Israel and shows a town the heart of God.

For those not familiar with this Old Testament story, let me set the scene. Ruth's mother-in-law, Naomi, had arrived in the land of Moab with her husband and two sons. They had left Israel due to famine. Naomi's sons both married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. Sadly, all three men died, so now only Naomi and her two daughter-in-laws remain. Naomi decided to return to Israel.

Ruth 1:8-10; 14-18

⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud ¹⁰ and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

¹⁴ At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." ¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Ruth and Naomi returned to Israel and settled in a town called Bethlehem. Neither had any source of income. So, Ruth went to a field owned by a farmer named Boaz.

Ruth 2:3

³ So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

This practice was allowed for the poor, widow, foreigners, and the orphans to pick up leftovers so they could glean food for their needs. Ruth humbled herself to provide for Naomi and herself. She was such a hard worker that she impressed the landowner, Boaz. He told her that she was welcome to glean food in his field, and he commanded his workers not to harass her.

Ruth 2:10-12

¹⁰ At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" ¹¹ Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹² May the LORD repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

Ruth humbles herself into a servant's position in order to honor Boaz. She was not concerned what others thought about her. She just wanted to show her appreciation for the kindness given. Ruth continued to work in the field. Boaz and Ruth eventually married, and then had a son named Obed.

Ruth 4:14-15

¹⁴ The women said to Naomi: "Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! ¹⁵ He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth."

What a compliment! The Word of God testifies to the amazing character of Ruth. She had thrown off the ways of the world and lived for God alone. Her life was blessed by the God she served. Throughout time, she is honored. How will your life be remembered? Will you be known as the one who ran after the world and hid behind all it's image with a plastic smile, but a heart that felt meaningless? Or, will you be known in eternity as the one who ran after God and felt the fullness of life, of being real with Him and with others?

Application

God is full of grace. He did not hold Ruth's pagan past against her. In fact, she became a part of the lineage of Christ! This week you may have discovered some sin in your life. Confess it to God and move on. His plan for your life is marvelous, better than anything this world can offer!

What most impressed you about Ruth?

What character traits do you have that are most like Ruth's?

What character traits do you want that Ruth portrayed?

How did Ruth model the opposite of the fairytale: Church is a fashion show?

