

Open Line Bible Study Lesson Seventeen May 15, 2018

Scripture Texts: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-10, Luke 8:4-15

Tonight's subject "The Purpose"

We pick up the conversation tonight about the LORD's promised "return" and the questions asked & statements made on p. 2 from last week's study. Last week we addressed the first point. Let's look at the second point now. We must acknowledge when there is a lack of return. This may well prove how we have not understood the parable and have not applied its deeper meanings into our walk with Christ and His ministry to us and others. At first glance, we would assume it should be obvious when there is a lack of return in our ministries and walk with Christ.

IT ONLY BECOMES OBVIOUS ONCE YOU HAVE YOUR EYES AND EARS OPENED TO THE FURTHER WORK OF THE FATHER'S PURPOSE. Thus most North American believers who are not evidencing the promised return Jesus offers fail to see this! It is one of the major reasons some keep having lack and poverty in their ministry. We have not realized the lack we are living in. This is not exclusive but very often most local churches that are hurting, in decline and have minimal results in their ministries continue in this lack and decline simply b/c they do not have any expectation of it being better. They assume all is well and their situation IS THE BEST IT CAN BE. They do not see any level of failure or problem! When this is the case this never ending dysfunction cycle will continue until the LORD intervenes through the intercessor and the 5 fold ministry proclamation. If you are blind, you will stay blind until someone prays, preaches and teaches the price to your liberation. It has taken me years to learn this truth. That was not altogether the LORD's plan. Some of that was my failure or sin. Many never see this truth and live in endless frustration about why some local church can't get their ministry plan together. Sometimes, they don't even want a ministry. They only wish to exist.

Again, their spiritual eyes and ears have not been opened. Then others do see the lack, crises and decline but when the problem doesn't improve in their timing they become discouraged and give up on their dreams. Others are so influenced by unbelief they have no expectation of the better plan the LORD has. When they hear about a better situation elsewhere, they refuse to believe it is the work of GOD! So they curse others advanced return! Still, others are simply unwilling to pay whatever the price is for the promised return b/c of their preoccupation with this life and the deceitfulness of the world's riches! Do you see a parallel here from the parable? Blindness, frustration, apathy, discouragement, unbelief, worry and deceit stop the promised return. The lack of return issue will never be changed until people see this is an issue. We must pray their spiritual eyes and ears will be opened to see the lack of return. Keep in mind we must also pray they understand the depth of what is a return. Remember, Jesus is looking at many criterions when He judges our return to His purpose.

Third, today's Church must deal with the questions about increase. Is increase guaranteed in some capacity if we are faithful? How do we understand increase? Apparently, there is a noticeable part of the body of Christ in America with the following problem. When you hear and consider their comments and criticisms of anyone who emphasizes increase, success, blessing or any level of prosperity their basic response is "this is not GOD" or "GOD doesn't do that" or even worse "GOD doesn't bless persons with material increase". If you are a student of the past 50 years of Church history in North America, you should know that there was and is some extremism in the prosperity gospel movement. That is true. It is also true that the opposite extreme is even more prevalent. However, an immature church will not criticize anyone for actually believing that our Heavenly Father hates wealth and actually wishes poverty, lack, failure and constant struggle on HIS church. While too much of the church cannot see this marred interpretation of the goodness of our GOD, the world certainly sees it and thinks "well, since your GOD hates wealth and wants everyone poor or barely making it, you can keep your GOD, we aren't interested" Here is the bottom line on this subject.

Does the LORD promise to ever bring increase into our life or not? Does the LORD really detest success, wealth and increase in any form? Anyone who actually believes such is going to have great difficulty ever being able to justify why they believe this and why they can justify any success in life just as long as you don't credit GOD with it b/c after all GOD hates increase. We cannot place every single person into some group as to how they understand increase and prosperity but most persons who wish to be critical of believing that GOD is willing to bring increase are very hypocritical about it. They have their basic needs met, they aren't poverty stricken, they may be average income or better and they never ask themselves, "Well, if GOD so hates increase then why do I have any increase? Am I sinning against GOD to prosper at all?" If you are balanced about this, you can see the dead end this always leads to. Here's the deeper issue! Persons who cannot accept GOD's increase are revealing they haven't come to terms with the goodness of GOD and HIS absolute willingness to often bless HIS children when possible. Another issue here is their trust of GOD. If you actually believe the LORD is never into increase then how can you trust HIM to ever bring provision, increase and blessing into your life? I wish to make it clear. Our Heavenly Father is willing to bring increase into the lives of those who will trust HIM and allow HIM to do so. So, yes, our GOD is for increase in our life.

Like the concept of return, we must know increase is not subject to obvious tangible prosperity alone. It is that and anything else multiplied by the LORD to benefit us. Claiming GOD is against increase is equivalent to claiming GOD isn't into life, joy or beauty. God wishes to increase the fullness of life into our being. He wants us to live life fully and to do this, increase in many capacities is necessary within and for us. Let's make it clear. Increase is neutral. What we do with it is what is right or wrong, righteous or sin. If GOD sees we are trustworthy then increase will flow in our life. Therefore increase is guaranteed in many ways if we are faithful. If you cannot accept this, your faith will always present a confusing message to others.

The 4th question goes, “Are we selling ourselves and LORD out in some unknown way if we are not seeing some form of obvious return?” Let me clarify the question. We should never presume we totally understand, expect or have received everything the LORD is willing and longing to do in any given situation. We must always have an expectation of the LORD to believe HE is more than “able to do immeasurably more than all we *ask or imagine*, according to his power that is at work within us.” Eph 3:20 Consider Phil 4:19, “And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.” When you read these verses with open eyes and ears how could anyone believe that our Heavenly Father is against the blessing of increase? If we presume upon the LORD what HE will do and that HIS work is done in any specific situation then we greatly cut ourselves off from expecting more, visioning more or asking for more. Consider as much as possible every facet and possibility of the LORD’s work and intervention when analyzing anything. Even then, you will not see all GOD sees! Because GOD is always bigger, brighter and smarter than us HE can do the impossible! Don’t sell your potential or the LORD’s ability out based upon your limited understanding. HE is more than able! The adversary can steal from us even what we don’t know. He often robs us without our knowledge. As the parable points out, if you don’t understand the seed cast forth the thief comes and steals that seed the sower cast into our hearts from the purpose of GOD’s heart!

The 5th question asks, “Is the promise of greater return something that the LORD requires to come to fruition for obedience to be authentic?” Let me ask this question this way. If we are obedient does it always lead to some form of “fruit” being borne in our life or others? Is it possible to obey GOD and there be nothing positive, pleasing or productive that comes forth from that act of obedience? Would the LORD ever determine our obedience is not complete if HE sees no “fruit” as the outcome of our obedience? This is a challenging question. Here is my point in it. The probable first fruit of genuine heart obedience is the broken repentant teachable humbled heart within us only the FATHER sees. We may not entirely know whether we have been altogether obedient or not in a given situation. As well we may not see greater return in the situation. But GOD does! We must rely on HIM in this situation presuming nothing totally giving ourselves up to JESUS and trusting that if anything is out of order HOLY SPIRIT will convict and direct us as necessary. The short answer to this question is yes. The depth of that answer is not always clear to the disciple. We must each trust the LORD to bring to our attention anything we don’t see or know that we must see and know.

The sixth question leads to a truck load of truth and manna from Heaven. Do the numbers referred to in M 13:9&23 mean anything else besides quantity? They absolutely do! Next week we’ll continue our study by examining these numbers and several truths the LORD has in store for us. Blessings this coming week!