

Sunday School Lesson



INTRODUCTION

The proclamation of the Word of God is not mere recital. It is not just to entertain - although many seem to believe this is the purpose of preaching. Nor is it simply to inform. Truth is to be presented, yes. The teaching of the Bible and the evidence of the truth of it must be communicated, but this communication is not an end in itself. The gospel consists of "facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, and promises to be enjoyed. Belief without obedience can scarcely be said to be belief at all - the devils also believe and tremble," (James 2:19). Consequently, those with whom the message is shared should be invited to confess Christ as Savior and to be buried with Him in baptism, to rise to new life, (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4). The work of the messenger of God is incomplete until he has extended God's invitation.

LESSON BACKGROUND

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." These are the opening words of the section of Isaiah known appropriately as "The Book of Comfort." The need for comfort was great. God had not wholly cast off His people, but He did permit them to suffer exile in Babylon because of their sins. Jerusalem lay in ruins and the exile dragged on into the second or third generation. Israel was a people robbed and spoiled. As the prophecy unfolds, it becomes evident that what is described for us is the beginning of a great era of salvation - something far more than the return of a few thousand Jews from Babylon. Theirs would be a temporal salvation, but not to be compared with the salvation from sin for time and eternity that the Servant of the Lord would provide. The Servant would make atonement for sin and usher in the kingdom of God, (Isiah 53).

Isaiah 55:1-2 - The Lord says, "Come, every one who is thirsty - here is water! Come, you that have no money - buy grain and eat! Buy wine and milk. Why spend money on what does not satisfy? Why spend your wages and still be hungry? Listen to me and do what I say, and you will enjoy the best food of all."

Our Scripture begins with a great invitation. Reading it, one is reminded of Jesus' parable of the great supper, (Luke 14:16). The feast was spread and guests were invited. Some refused, but when the invitation was extended to others, they accepted gladly. The parable teaches of God's invitation to a place in His kingdom, (Luke 14:15), not just to a table of ordinary food. So it is in our lesson today.

There is absolutely no discrimination, no limitation to the invitation except the necessity that one desires what is offered that he thirst for it. It is sad that some do not recognize the soul's hunger, even though they may experience it. They do know that something is wrong, but they will not admit that the void in their lives is caused by their alienation from God. If we actually long for fellowship with God, it will be ours for the taking.

Deuteronomy 33:27 contains the beautiful promise, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Eternal, everlasting - this is our God! Human contracts are dated. Leases expire. But the life that is united with God through Christ Jesus is in an everlasting covenant with Him.

V. 3). "Listen now, my people, and come to me; come to me, and you will have life! I will make a lasting covenant with you and give you the blessings I promised David."

The verbs in this verse tell the story: Listen, come, live.

Two things are necessary. The first is to hear. If I close my ears to God's entreaties and refuse even to consider His call, I can never know what fellowship with Him might bring. Well did Jesus say, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." But hearing alone is not enough. (2) We must respond to His invitation, come unto me. One does not drift into the kingdom of God nor into fullness of life. There must be a definite act of commitment, a time of decision.

Our lesson today establishes that God desires salvation and blessing for humankind. He would give us that bread of life, which alone can assuage the deep hunger of the soul. To spend one's life in the pursuit of the things of the world is to waste it on "that which is not bread," that which can never satisfy.

Furthermore, God calls. He invites, in spite of our unworthiness, for His ways are not the ways of man.

All the money in the world cannot buy the gifts of God. Yet, if we earnestly desire them, they may be ours without money, a free gift of God's love.

Dr. Green Says:

Urban Studies Students Are Activists At Heart!

Special To The Post
The advertising slogan "reach out and touch someone," is literally taken to heart by the Johnson C. Smith University Urban Studies Department.

Department head Dr. Earl Green and projects coordinator Hattie Leeper have developed extensive two-way ties into the Charlotte community.

"We feel it is important to substantiate the theories and structures learned in class with practical application in the streets," explained Dr. Green. "Our Urban Studies students are heavily involved with internships, research, neighborhood projects and bringing in a great number of experts from the government and human service fields to share their experience with us."

Armed with a major grant from the Charles Steward Mott Foundation, the Urban Studies department set up as major projects the Urban Life Associates and the Community Outreach Program. Urban Life Associates is a federation of neighborhood leaders joined together to improve the quality of their lives. An annual conference discusses long range planning issues such as transportation, land use, growth patterns and 10-year projected images. Frequent breakfast meetings focus on immediate neighborhood concerns and as a forum to bring in community experts to address problems or topics of interest to neighborhood groups. The Community Outreach Program is service oriented ranging from special story presentations in day care centers to working in senior citizens centers.

"Over 50 percent of our students go into graduate school in Urban Planning or Public Administration," pointed out Dr. Green. "The rest go into the job market. Each group needs extensive exposure and experience in the day-to-day operation of human service agencies if their training here is to offer market skills."

Internships are a key to the program. Most interns are placed in government and private agencies and are involved primarily with research. Smith students are currently helping gather facts for the Urban League's "Status of Black Charlotte" report due in early May that examines black issues of unemployment, housing, crime, women's issues and others. Research is also being completed for an April FOCUS report on the "History of Black School Closings, 1982-Present," which will document the history of black public schools in Charlotte-Meck-



Dr. Earl Green
.....Projects coordinator
lenburg and their principals. Other placements include working with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission.

Conferences also add to the students' development. Several Smithites attended a recent North Carolina Crime Prevention Conference at N.C. State University. Students Willie Houston and Veronica Williams have attended the annual Washington Center for Learning Alternatives which holds a forum on a current topic (this year's being the making of a president to coincide with the 1984 elections). The Urban Studies department hosts an annual elected officials conference for Charlotte officials to share their expertise with Smith students.

Community involvement continues in two other projects, the annual "Leadership Training and Development Workshop" and the Thursday night seminar series.

"The Leadership Training Workshop is held in conjunction with the Agricultural Extension Service," remarked Ms. Leeper. "This year we concentrated on leadership styles."

The workshop, held at the Ramada Inn downtown and attended by 110 people, will follow up with booklets to be distributed to neighborhood groups.

The Thursday night seminar series is held from

7-10 p.m. in McCrorey Hall, room 208, each Thursday evening during the school year. Subjects range widely from the career experiences of black actors to how to start a small business to crime prevention. The series is open free to the public.


"The department is very young, having started in 1980, but we're very active," stated Dr. Green. "Future efforts will be to enhance our collection of urban data, and more computer technology, continue to update the curriculum, and increase internships and faculty."

"The telephone commercial fits Urban Studies

as a theme," assessed one major. "You have to be a combination of people person, problem solver and detective who doesn't shy away from demanding work. But there's a great deal of satisfaction gained from becoming involved."

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OFFICIAL RULES - NO PURCHASE NECESSARY

1. Enter the sweepstakes by filling out the entry form below (or you can write your name, address, city, state and zip code on a plain 7 x 5" piece of paper) and mailing your entry to: \$100,000 Black History Month Scholarship Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 88713, Atlanta, GA 30356. All entries must be received by May 1, 1984. Entries or envelopes that have been printed by machine or otherwise are unacceptable. Entries must be handwritten.
2. Two Grand Prize winners and five First Prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from among all eligible entries. Enter as often as you wish, but each entry must be mailed in a separate envelope. The Coca-Cola Company will not be responsible for lost, misdirected or late mail. Drawing will be conducted by Independent Judgment Center, 5543 Woodloch Drive, Dunwoody, GA 30328. An independent judging organization will be notified by mail by July 10, 1984. The odds of winning depend upon the total number of entries received. All federal, state and local laws, rules, and regulations apply to the sweepstakes. Winner or assignee consents to the use of his or her name and/or likeness for promotional purposes without additional compensation.
3. Winner may assign the scholarship to someone else (assignee) who must use it in accordance with stated rules.
4. No substitute prizes. Winner or assignee may not receive cash in lieu of scholarship.
5. In order to receive the scholarship, winner or assignee is responsible for obtaining admission to his or her selected college or university, if admission is not obtained within 12 months, or winner forfeits the prize. A second drawing will be held and the same rules will apply.
6. Winner or assignee must begin using scholarship no later than 18 months from winning date. The scholarship must be used at one of the 42 colleges or universities affiliated with the United Negro College Fund (UNCF).
7. Winner or assignee must use the scholarship within four years from date of beginning use.
8. The scholarship will be presented to UNCF, who will give it to the school selected by the winner or assignee. The school will pay for the winner's or assignee's tuition, board and books in accordance with the procedures normally followed by the college or university for dispensing scholarships to students. Total value of each of the two (2) Grand Prize scholarships will be \$25,000 or each of the five (5) First Prize scholarships will be \$10,000.
9. This sweepstakes open to residents of the U.S. 18 years and older except employees and their families of The Coca-Cola Company, its bottlers, advertising agencies and independent bottlers. Offer void where prohibited and subject to federal, state and local laws.
10. Name of winners may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to \$100,000 Black History Month Scholarship Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 88713, Atlanta, GA 30356.

Last year, Donald R. Wright saw his dream for a college education come true. He won a four year scholarship to college.

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