

By Beagle Wilbon

Sunday School Lesson

INTRODUCTION

We believe that persons are of value. No one would make a great stir about the loss of a ring or bracelet purchased in a few minutes at a dime store. But if a ring or bracelet set with diamonds or precious rubies were lost, great concern would be expressed and a vigorous search would be instituted. The difference would lie in the worth of the objects lost.

Our lesson today encourages us to regard ourselves through the eyes of Jesus. He tells us we are unique and precious in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. He urges us not to underestimate our worth, but to realize we have our origin in God, our destiny in God, and our lives constantly under the care of a God of love.

THE LESSON

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Matt. 10:28-31).

The ultimate threat of all evil forces is that they may end our earthly lives. "We have," they say, "the power to kill you, so you had better do what we tell you, or not do what we forbid." In the face of such threats, some relinquish their high moral values simply to preserve their present physical existence. Jesus Himself faced this threat, but endured the cross rather than deny that He was the Son of God. Although we need not fear those who can kill our physical bodies, Jesus indicated that there is one whom we should fear -- God, who can destroy our entire beings in a place of suffering and exclusion from Himself.

Two sparrows. Such little birds were eaten by poor people in Jesus' day. Farthing names a coin, made of copper, worth somewhat less than two cents in the USA. So Jesus was speaking about a small amount of money. Yet we note that not even one sparrow fell on the ground, dead or injured, without being noticed by God. God's greatness is seen not only in His care for vast stellar bodies and momentous events, but also in His awareness of every small reality of His universe. So His care in the formation of cells, crystals, and snowflakes should not surprise us.

If God cares for and marks the most minor realities of His creation, will He not care for man who is made in His image? It is not amiss to observe that Jesus made a comparison here between the value of the birds and the value of men. While God is the creator of all and is interested in the care and preservation of His world, He is more concerned about the welfare of man who is the apex of His creation. We note that birds and animals still do instinctively those things "programmed" into their life processes. How sad that man, possessing higher reason and spiritual awareness, often chooses to rebel against God instead of conforming to His will. Men themselves not only refuse to care for the beautiful creation of our Father, but also refuse to love and cherish others -- hating, hurting, and even killing one another. They thus act as if men were worth very little.

We do not think often of Jesus' anger. We speak much more frequently of His love, His patience, and His grace. This is as it should be, for Jesus was full of compassion and alive with kindness. He held children in His arms, healed the blind, deaf and maimed, and even touched with cleansing and curative hands the lepers' decaying flesh. Even on the cross He prayed for the forgiveness of those who nailed Him there.

Yet it is well to remember that Jesus did become angry. He was greatly troubled by the persistent lack of human concern shown by the religious leaders among His own people. What were some of the things that made Jesus angry?

A) Lovelessness - This was the failing of the Pharisees and Scribes. They had Scriptural knowledge, dedication to religious ends, and usually separation from sensual pursuits. Yet they were loveless. They had no sensitivity to the needs, longings, and hurts of men. Above all, they wanted to put men in straitjackets of conformity and to imprison them within walls and bars of rigid rules and heartless practices. Read Matt. 23:13-26.

B) Listlessness - The letter to the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-19) indicates that Jesus cannot "stomach" a lukewarm and apathetic attitude toward His Kingdom. People tend to be unrealistic, assuming they are rich and secure when in reality they are "poor, blind, and naked." At least warm, fiery opponents take the claims of Jesus seriously and attack them, while the listless, cold, apologetic, unenthusiastic "friends" are a hindrance and a peril.

C) Lawlessness - By this we mean obedience to Jesus' will or law. Jesus stressed this repeatedly at the close of the Sermon on the Mount. It is not enough to hear Jesus' words; one must do what He says. Notice the stress on "doing" in Matthew 7:21, 24, 26. It is not enough to say Lord, Lord, or even to prophesy or cast out demons. Beyond all else is conformity to Jesus' will. True, we are not under the "law of Moses," but we are under the "law of Christ." This is not to say one is bound again by the legal exactitudes of Old Testament laws, but one is constantly obligated to obey the law of love to God, to man, and especially to those of "the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). This is shown by deeds of considerations, compassion, and consolation.

Jesus cared about peoples' needs and how others responded to them. Do we?

Opinions Around Town

Does The Weather Affect Your Mood?

Now that the holidays are over, winter is here in earnest. For some, the post-holiday period is one of, if not outright depression, at least a case of the blues. Whether this phenomenon is brought about as a result of a let-down after the hectic days of December, or is caused by cloudy skies and enforced indoor living is up to the social scientists to figure out.

Charlotteans this week were asked, "Does the weather affect your mood?" All agreed that the weather does affect how they feel to some degree.

● **PAT HEARD**, Youth Supervisor for the Parent Infant Training Program, Mecklenburg Center for Human Development, reported that she's more of a summer person. "When it's bright and sunny, I'm bouncy and peppy," she said. "When it's gray, I don't want to do much of anything. I dread winter and being inside a lot. I prefer being outside."

● **JOHN HEATH**, Field Representative for the Social Security Administration, stated that his moods are usually pretty even. "My moods don't change that much, but yes, on a bright and sunny day I tend to be more cheerful. When it's cloudy, I'm more low-key and tend to want to stay at home. Changes in the seasons don't bother me, but I'm more active in summer."

● **ARTHUR GRIFFIN**, owner of A & G Office Supplies and member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School



Arthur Griffin
.....Sun makes him active



Pat Heard
.....A summer person



John Heath
.....Pretty even moods



Dr. Michael Stout
.....Moved here for sun

Board, is also affected by the weather. "The weather affects my mood in that, when the sun is shining, it makes me want to be more active physically, like getting outside and doing something in the yard. Whether it's summer or winter, the sun makes me want to get out. It inhibits my creativity to sit at a desk when the sun is shining."

● **DR. MICHAEL STOUT**, dentist, made it unanimous. "I would say yes, especially if we get continuous bad weather for a period of two or three days, it depresses my mood. Sunshine motivates me. The reason

I moved to Charlotte from Ohio is that there we had nine months of depressing weather and depressed spirits. Down here it's just the opposite--nine months of good weather."

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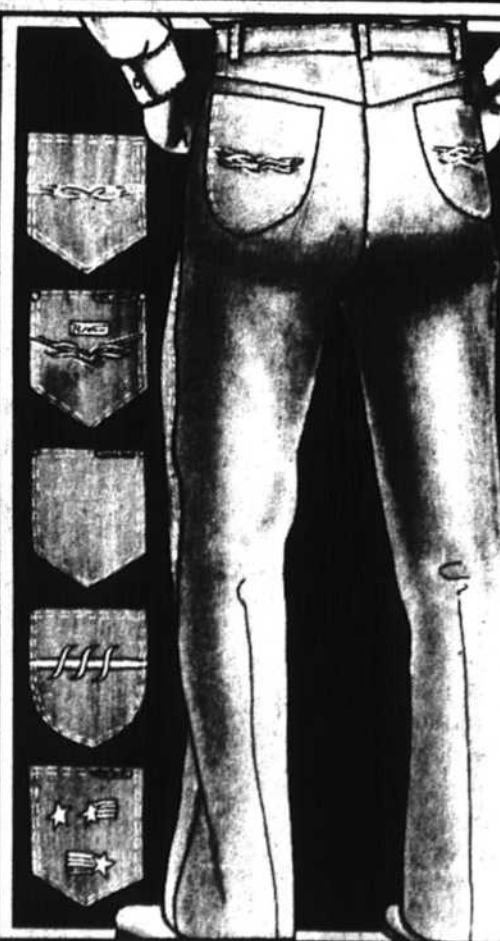
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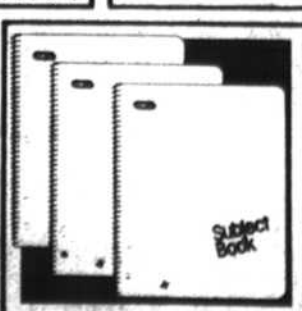
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