

Sunday School Lesson



By Bessie Wilbon

INTRODUCTION

"Lord of Life" is a theme most appropriately drawn from the Gospel according to John. Life is one of three key words resounding through the book. The other two are light and love.

Jesus, the friend of tax collectors and sinners, enjoyed the friendship also of some highly respected citizens. Among them was the family of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary at Bethany, a town just outside Jerusalem. They were held in warm affection by Jesus. We meet the sisters first in Luke's account of Jesus' being entertained in Martha's home. The next mention of this family in Scripture is John's account of the death and rising of Lazarus. It becomes clear that the sisters knew where to contact Jesus in His journeying, that the family was well regarded by the Jews in Jerusalem; and that they had sufficient wealth to provide their own burial cave.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus was somewhere in Perea, east of the Jordan, when a message from the sisters of Bethany brought news that "he whom thou lovest is sick." Jesus replied, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." He remained with His disciples for two more days where He was, before telling them that Lazarus was dead and that He was going to Bethany "that I may awake him out of sleep." The errand to the environs of Jerusalem was not without risk. The disciples were fully aware that bitter enemies awaited Him there, and Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

THE LESSON

"When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been buried four days before. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Judeans had come to see Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother's death. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died! But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask him for.' 'Your brother will rise to life,' Jesus told her. 'I know,' she replied, 'that he will rise to life on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord!' she answered." (John 11:17-27. Be sure to read John 11:38-44 for the completion of the lesson for today.)

Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead and He probably knew when the death occurred. In revealing that Lazarus was dead, Jesus had told his disciples, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him." We can all rejoice, even amid our sympathy for the sisters, that Jesus was not there. The fact that Lazarus had been buried for four days gives to this miracle of resurrection the greatest evidential power.

Did someone tell Martha Jesus was coming? Or did Jesus, wishing some measure of privacy for His first conversation with the sisters, choose a meeting place outside the town and send word for her to meet Him there? At any rate, He did not come into Bethany until after He had talked with both of the sisters.

Jesus dealt with one obstacle, only to meet with another. Lazarus' tomb could have been opened by the same angel who rolled the stone from His own burial place. But a certain economy seems to rule in Biblical miracles. God does not do for men what they can do for themselves. Several strong men would probably be required to remove the stone.

The second obstacle was Martha's reluctance, surprising in the light of her already expressed faith in Jesus, but not surprising in the light of the circumstances and Martha's practical, take charge nature. Did she think Jesus had forgotten the facts of the case? Not many human beings are totally constant or consistent in all they say and do. We may be grateful for the grace and patience of God, covering our lapses.

"Loose him, and let him go!" Jesus is Lord but He never exercised coercive control over one to whom He had ministered with a miracle. He gave life, health, vision, hearing, soundness of limb, and freedom from demons, with no strings attached. The new powers became each recipient's own possession and responsibility. Some were ungrateful and disobedient. Some, though, were like the blind man to whom Jesus said, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole," and the man immediately received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.

So it was in the aftermath of Lazarus' being raised. Lazarus and his sisters opened heart and home to Jesus in grateful affection. Many of the Jews believed in Jesus because of what they had seen. Others became informers against Him to His enemies. And the Jewish high council, hearing the report, determined that both Jesus and Lazarus must be put to death because they threatened the establishment in Jerusalem.

What, then is your response and report concerning the Lord of Life? By word and demonstration, the raising of Lazarus establishes Jesus as the Lord of Life.

At Planned Parenthood

Author Of "Women And Children Last" To Speak During Anniversary Luncheon

By Jalyne Strong
Post Staff Writer

Ruth Sidel, Ph.D., a professor of sociology at Hunter College, NY and author of the "startling expose" "Women and Children Last: The Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America," will speak at Planned Parenthood of Greater Charlotte's 16th Anniversary Luncheon on Thursday, January 29, 12 noon at the Radisson Plaza Hotel.

A graduate of Wellesley College and Boston University School of Social Work, Dr. Sidel has focused much of her career around the well-being of families. She worked for several years as a psychiatric social worker whose clients were families trying to cope with serious economic and emotional problems. And she has examined the role of women, the care of preschool children, and the provision of human services.

In her book "Women and Children Last," Dr. Sidel's primary concern is with the plight of poor women and their children. "The evidence Mrs. Sidel reviews," states The New York Times Book Review, "provides a refutation of the blame-the-victim view that forms the policy of the Reagan Administration."

Countless Americans are at risk of becoming poor through no fault of their own she's found, noting that "middle and upper-middle class women are not immune from poverty when a man walks out or illness



Dr. Ruth Sidel

strikes...millions of women are a divorce away from destitution, millions of workers are a layoff away from poverty."

Based on the accounts of women and children living in poverty, the thrust of Dr. Sidel's book is a call for a far-reaching national family policy that will both strengthen family life and protect the well-being of children. She recommends reform in the area of employment, welfare, and universal entitlements to health and child care. Interestingly, writes Times Book Review, "All the specific programs concerning health and child care that Mrs. Sidel proposes are already available in most industrialized na-

tions of the world--except the United States, to our disgrace."

"With grace and persuasiveness," Times Book Review further states, "(Dr. Sidel's book) provides us with the tools that would permit America to 'wash away the tears' of millions of women, men and children who now live wasted lives for the lack of help an affluent society can afford, but has chosen not to give."

At Planned Parenthood's anniversary luncheon, Dr. Sidel will offer a presentation of the future and the vulnerability of the contemporary American family.

Over 600 people are expected to attend this luncheon which is open to the public by reservation only. Tickets are \$15 per person, \$120 to host a table for 8, or \$150 to host a table of 10.

At this luncheon, James Leavelle will be inaugurated as president of

the Planned Parenthood Board of Directors, 1987, and a well-known community person will be honored by receiving the prestigious Margaret Sanger Award.

Planned Parenthood of Greater Charlotte is a private non-profit family planning organization with two locations in Charlotte: Planned Parenthood Central, 951 South Independence Blvd. and Planned Parenthood East, 5231 Albermarle Rd.



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Winfield Major Joins Chamber

The Charlotte Chamber is pleased to announce the addition of Winfield W. Major to its staff in the position of Small Business Consultant. Major will be working closely with Small Business Services Vice President Lawrence Toliver in providing assistance for small business owners.

"Lawrence and I will work together because of our diversified backgrounds. I will blend in and supplement his many abilities, and round out the department," Major said. "I

have always been interested in the Chamber's role in the community, and I have a great respect for the professionalism of the Chamber. I hope that my experience in the financial area will benefit the mem-

bers." Major served as managing partner of the Charlotte office of Ernst & Whinney between 1978 and 1985, and prior to that, was the managing partner of their office in Rochester, New York.

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