

RELIGION

Losing touch with Saviour

Sunday School Lesson

Devotional Reading: Luke 15:12-24
Lesson Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

Publicans were tax collectors, usually Jewish, employed by the Roman authorities. They were despised as traitors to their own nation and for making themselves rich by charging more than they were authorized to collect.

Sinners were those people who for any of several reasons were outside the Jewish religious community. Persons of loose morals and bad behavior

and irreligious persons would be included. These were not welcomed in the synagogues. But Jesus would talk with them - not just at them - and what He said

made sense. They came from great distances to hear Him. Church folk should bring the same serious purpose to their church attendance - to hear the word of God.

Pharisees. The name means separated. They were zealous keepers and advocates of the Mosaic law. Jesus came into conflict with their legalism.

Scribes were craftsmen who made hand-lettered copies of the Scriptures. Their interest in the Scriptures naturally led to their being teachers of the law.

Here was the scribes and the Pharisee's chief complaint against Jesus, he had eaten with them.

Jesus did not need to be informed about what the Pharisees and scribes were thinking and saying among themselves. He knew just as on other occasions. We must never think that our God does not know what we are doing or saying or thinking or suffering. He knows all too well our dissatisfaction with His way of doing things.

Jesus raised no questions about the shepherd's putting the flock at risk by leaving them in the open pasture land. That was not an issue in the parable. Jesus' focus was on finding the lost. The search for a missing child may leave the rest of the family feeling neglected, but they will be cared for when the emergency has been met.

Go after that which is lost until he find it. The search acknowledges only one purpose and is not complete until it is successful. The parable is not truly understood until we feel the wrench of lostness as it applies to a person out of contact with Christ, the shepherd and Bishop of your soul.

It must be the water

Some claim Detroit minister is the vessel for curing

By Tammie Tolbert
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Blessing water is helping Bishop Wayne T. Jackson to bring the power of God to people. Jackson, the pastor of Great Faith Ministries International in Detroit, has prayed over 10,000 gallons of water, which has some people claiming the water has healed them of everything from crack cocaine to cancer.

"I don't make claims of being a healer. I am a vessel and I am doing what Christ has asked me to do," Jackson said. The 42-year-old bishop believes that God has given him this gift to bless water that is mentally, physically, and emotionally healing people.

"When He is through working through this vehicle (the water), when He decides to lift the anointing off the water, He will tell me to stop," Jackson said. "I have always prayed to see the supernatural powers of the God of the Bible."

Jackson says that the God who has blessed him is the same God who made the heavens, the same God who spoke the earth into being and the same God who turned water into wine.

"I never wanted to set in the church and be religious, I wanted God to use me to show what He is capable of doing," Jackson said.

Jackson recognized his God-given ability to bless water last year. Jackson said that God told him that He was going to bless his ministry because he had been a faithful servant over a few things.

"God told me to take some water and to pray over it, but I could not sell it or take his glory," Jackson said. Jackson said that he did not realize how God was going to use the water, but he knew to take God at his word.

"When a sick relative came to me, we prayed together and then I prayed over a glass of water and that following Monday they said that their illness had completely disappeared," he said.

Jackson continued to do his prison ministry as well as his church, radio and television ministry and his congregations gradually began bringing him water to pray over. "People like Marvin Forman, Evie Baker, Karen Roberts, and Tracey Woods were calling my office and giving me their personal testimonies of how they were being relieved of illnesses that they had carried for years," Jackson said.



PHOTO/COURTESY OF WAYNE JACKSON
Bishop Wayne Jackson prays over water in Detroit. The minister says he doesn't claim healing powers. "I am a vessel," he says.

When life meets doctrine

Conn. court rules for Witness

By Strat Douthat
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARTFORD, Conn. - A hospital that gave a life-saving blood transfusion to a woman who had refused it on religious grounds acted in violation of her constitutional rights, the state Supreme Court ruled.

The patient's "common law right of bodily self-determination was entitled to respect and protection," the court ruled Monday in an unanimous opinion that could serve as a guide for all Connecticut hospitals in the

• Hospital officials got an emergency order...and went ahead with the transfusion.
Nelly E. Vega, a Jehovah's Witness, began bleeding severely after giving birth to her first child at Stamford Hospital in August 1994. Doctors

could not give her a transfusion because she and her husband had signed a form refusing it on religious grounds.

Hospital officials got an emergency order from a Stamford Superior Court judge during the middle of the night and went ahead with the transfusion. They said it was necessary to save the woman's life and because the baby needed its mother.

But the Supreme Court said the lower court erred.

"The hospital's interests were sufficiently protected by Vega's informed choice, and neither it nor the trial court was entitled to override that choice," wrote Justice David M. Borden.

The Vegas appealed the lower court's decision to prevent the hospital from performing any future forced transfusions. Nelly Vega was depicted as a surrogate for the other Jehovah's Witnesses living in Connecticut.

The hospital said the appeal should be dismissed because the issue was moot, since Vega had already been given the transfusion. The Appellate Court, the state's intermediate appeals court, agreed.

But the Supreme Court said the same circumstances will arise again and that the state's hospitals need guidance on how to treat patients who do not wish to be given transfusions.

Eye On Gospel

Resse celebrates 'Angel,' Franklin wins Image Award

Praise God from whom all blessings flow," was the response from Della Reese to winning an Image Award for best actress in a drama with her portrayal of an angel in the highly successful CBS series, "Touched by an Angel."

"I've received a lot of awards, but this is my first Image Award and I love it to pieces," Reese said. And while clearly moved by the emotionalism of the moment, Reese was focused in her reply, when asked how it was that she's been able to be so successful in her lifelong career in show business.

"You've got to have some kind of basis that will sustain you in order to do anything," she began. "A level platform to stand on. I've been standing on God since I was 6, and I'm firm on standing there, so that when things come I can be like the reed. It might knock me over but the God in me will stand me back up. That's how come I've been there so long. I keep depending on him and trusting in him and he never leaves me or forsakes me or fails me. I can only speak to you of things I

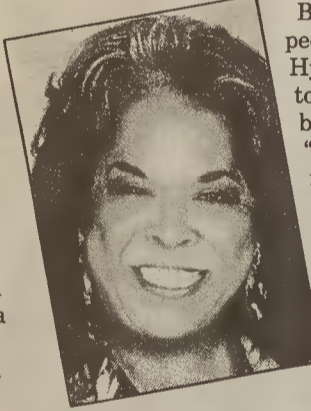
know," she went on to preach to the packed press room backstage.

"And I know that if you trust in God, you can do anything you want to cause everything is possible with God. I have young people from 3 years to about 19 in Sunday school at my church and we teach them the principles of God and say "stand on him and get out there and be whatever you want to be."

When asked about the success of the show, she had this to say: "We've tried sex. We've tried technology. We've tried going to the moon. We've tried the American dream. We've tried all kinds of drugs. We've tried everything but nothing works. When we get the money, it doesn't make us feel as good as we thought it would make us feel. When we get the position, it doesn't make us feel as good as we thought because we have nothing spiritual to stand on and I think its time...Now, we've all come to understand as a human race that we've got to have something better than these things that we thought would work."

The success of the show itself is testament to just what God can do. Just last year, CBS execs were considering cancellation of the show due to poor ratings. But with a let-

ter-writing campaign that was fueled by some high-powered Hollywood personalities who also happened to be Christians and a solid Saturday night time slot before "Walker Texas Ranger," the show is faring so well that not only is CBS developing a spin-off, but it has executives at both ABC and NBC looking into other such formats. It is a notion that delights Reese.



Reese

"I like to be a part of the changing scene," she declares. I love that."

In related news, CBS is receiving recognition as one of the most positive portrayals of religion on any network, according to the Media Research Center, a watchdog group that analyzes the portrayal of religion in TV. Credit CBS' high score to the success of "Touched by an Angel," which that study reveals is more than likely the most positive pro-faith show in television history. Fact is, the survey concluded that positive portrayals of religion are up

and last year, outnumbered negative portrayals. However, the center was concerned by the increase in negative portrayals of the clergy and Christians portrayed as fanatics.

By the way: 300-500 people turned out at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Chicago to celebrate the release of "My Life," the debut recording on Intersound of 19-year-old DeLeon Richards. A proclamation from the mayor of Chicago deemed "DeLeon Day" and expected guest Fred Hammond, who was one of the producers on

the album. (He also sings a duet with Richards on "I Want to Worship You)...Congratulations to Kirk Franklin, who took top honors in the gospel category at the 27th annual NAACP Image Awards.

This week's scripture: Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: The Lord knows those who are his and everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." 2 Timothy 2:19

Defrocked minister gets life, plus 22 years

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RIVERSIDE, Calif. - A defrocked Muslim minister who opened fire on a crowd at a university rally nearly two years ago, wounding a Nation of Islam leader and five others, was sentenced to a life prison term plus 22 years.

Superior Court Judge Dennis Myers imposed the sentence Friday, saying he had no choice, even though

James Bess has since denounced his own acts.

Bess must serve at least 18 years before becoming eligible for parole, said Deputy District Attorney William Mitchell.

During his trial one month ago, Bess denied that he tried to kill Nation of Islam Minister Khalid Muhammad following a lecture at the University of California, Riverside. The trial ended

with Bess convicted of attempted murder and three counts of assault on wounding Muhammad and five of his bodyguards.

But Bess, a defrocked Nation of Islam minister, has since admitted to the shootings, calling them "stupid" and contrary to his strong moral, non-violent beliefs.

In a probation report prepared for the judge, Bess said

he did not think he would survive the attack, although he did not consider his a "suicide mission."

Bess said he had suffered some harassment from Muhammad's associates when he was defrocked 10 years ago and that he became increasingly alarmed with Muhammad's militant preachings.

"He erroneously hoped his

aggression would somehow be a positive lesson against the use of violence," according to the report. "He realizes he has engaged in the exact behavior he committed his life to change."

Bess said he plans to write religious books and articles while in prison. He has been in protective custody since his arrest following the May 29, 1994, shooting.