

## **The Teachings Of Jesus — Simplicity Itself.**

Text: Luke 18:31-43

1) Do Not Add Anything

Suggested Hymns:

2) Do Not Take Away Anything

261, 263, 235, 288, 158

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 18:31-43, <sup>31</sup> *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.* <sup>32</sup> *“For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.* <sup>33</sup> *“They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”*

<sup>34</sup> *But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.*

<sup>35</sup> *Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging.* <sup>36</sup> *And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant.* <sup>37</sup> *So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.* <sup>38</sup> *And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”*

<sup>39</sup> *Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”* <sup>40</sup> *So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him,* <sup>41</sup> *saying, “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.”*

<sup>42</sup> *Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”* <sup>43</sup> *And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Twelve men had been studying under Jesus for a period of three years. These men were with their Teacher all the time. Their study time equalled or exceeded that which is required today for a full university course.

Even with an accelerated program these men put in sufficient hours to have received a degree in theology had they been at one of our universities today. They received not only the academic training, but with it also the necessary practical training.

Then came a test, an examination. This is the report, the grades, that were received when that examination was over, <sup>34</sup> ***But they understood none of these things.*** A rather a bad report, was it not?

The Teacher was Jesus Himself. Failure could not have been the Teacher's fault. The students were the twelve Apostles, whom Jesus Himself had chosen. These men were no less intelligent than you or I. No less apt to learn than you or I. Just as studious, if not more so, than you and I.

Yet near the end of their training time, when they should have been able to apply the things they learned, "***they understood none of these things.***" The finest Teacher in the world, students whom Jesus Himself had chosen, and yet, seemingly, they could not understand.

In the face of this let us realise that the teachings of Jesus are simplicity itself. Anyone who really studies the teachings of Jesus with understanding will be able to grasp His teachings.

You say: "*That does not make sense. You just told us that men who were trained, men who had had the equivalent of a university training, men who had sat under the greatest Teacher, could not understand.*"

Correct, but they failed because of two things that still play a great part in the acceptance or non-acceptance of Jesus today. Let us consider these two things. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Do Not Add Anything**

In the first place, Jesus' teachings are very simple to understand if man does not add anything to them. Jesus' words are very easy to understand if man's wisdom does not elaborate on them so that they become hard to understand.

That is what happened to the Apostles in Jesus' time. They added some things to what Jesus had been teaching. They did not simply accept that which He had taught at face value. Jesus had made a number of promises to them. The disciples heard those promises. But it was difficult for them to remember that these were spiritual promises, promises for the heart and for heaven, and not for bread and butter.

Jesus told them of what was coming in the days ahead and that they were not to add the thoughts of the material.

Let us consider an example. While they were on a trip going up to Jerusalem, the very trip spoken of in our text, two of the Apostles, James and John, came to Jesus with their mother and said, *“Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.”*<sup>36</sup> *And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?”*<sup>37</sup> *They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”*<sup>1</sup>

Honour, privilege, influence, power, those were the things in their minds. Christ had made a great, spiritual promise about His kingdom; about the kingdom which was coming; about the Kingdom of Grace and Mercy and of Glory, but they added material thoughts. They added something of their own to what Jesus had been teaching.

So it is today. Much of the difficulty in understanding the teachings of Jesus stems from this adding to the things what Jesus said. People are not willing to simply let it go at what He has spoken. When Jesus speaks, that is sufficient for us, both in knowledge and in promise.

But many people are not satisfied with that. They add their own ideas. For example, a person may become a church member, he becomes a Christian, and in the church he hears the blessed promises of the Lord their God. Is he satisfied with that?

Too often such people add to God's promises just as the disciples did. They think that there should come to them some honour, some influence, some praise, material things, sometimes even money, because they have become Christians, because they have become church members.

Others, like James and John, feel, *“We have been members for a long, long time, so we deserve things that others should not have.”* You see, they are not

satisfied to let things stand as Jesus gave them, to let His promises be those eternally glorious promises for the spirit of man.

Yes, Jesus also made promises for our bodies. He certainly did. He proved that a few moments after what had happened in our text. When He saw a blind man, He healed him, He gave him his sight. Jesus does not say, *“I am only interested in the soul.”* Jesus is interested in the whole human being.

But when it comes to those things that Jesus promises us, we must not begin to add our own material thoughts, our own material human things, to those things that Jesus has given. When we do that, then we start building up all kinds of systems of theology and systems of religion. Then we find this mixture of Jesus’ teaching and man’s additions terribly, terribly hard to understand.

If you stay with what Jesus says, it is simple. Jesus simply told His disciples, *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.”*<sup>32</sup> *“For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.”*<sup>33</sup> *“They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”* Very simple to understand if you do not add anything to it.

As Jesus and His Apostles travelled up to Jerusalem, they came to a place where a number of beggars had gathered. Matthew tells us that among these were two blind men and that these two blind men began to cry for help.

In our text we are told how one of them asked for help. And those who had been with Jesus a long, long time, His disciples, as well as others, *warned him that he should be quiet.* In other words they were saying, *“Beggar, keep quiet! This is not the time to ask; this is not the place to ask; this is not the proper manner of asking. You are not following the established external forms which must be followed before you can come to the Lord Jesus.”*

So they tried to quiet the beggar. But *Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him.* He puts them all aside and speaks to the man alone and says, *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* He said, *“Lord, that I may receive my sight.”* Jesus said, *“Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”*

Here Jesus taught His Apostles another lesson, even though He didn't speak to them at all. *"If you had only remembered, My good disciples, that it is not the external forms which you have added which count, but the mere thought that a man will come to Me and ask for help."* Simple, is it not? And that is the simplest thing in all Christian religion and faith.

That is something the smallest child can understand: when help is needed, we go to the One who can help us. That is the fundamental, central core of all Christian faith, of all Christianity itself: that we go to God and to our loving Saviour, who can help us when we need help. The blind man understood that. But how difficult it became for him when men added their notions to complicate Jesus' teaching.

So it was when Jesus lived. So it is today. Certainly orderliness must exist. For example right here in our Worship Service. We must, by agreement, reach certain policies in externals and carry these out.

Just imagine what our Worship Service would be like if at the same time, one of you decided to sing, another to pray, and a third to go to Communion, if the organist decided that he wants to play a voluntary, and the pastor wants to preach now, stop and, then preach again. We would find it extremely difficult to worship.

So, for the benefit of all, we have established a certain form of worship to follow. Thus there is orderliness in our worship. When we speak of external forms which people have added to the Word of God, we do not refer to such matters at all.

But if Jesus tells you to pray anywhere and at any time, but then men tell you that the only time those prayers count is if you make them nine times at the same place, men are adding something to what Jesus said and making difficult a very simple truth.

By men's additions it becomes intricate and involved and difficult, does it not? Jesus tells us that we may pray at any time; that He will hear us no matter where we may be and no matter what our troubles may be, even if our prayer be only the sigh of our hearts before the throne of God.

But then men tell you: *"Oh, but you must use certain prescribed forms and orders. You have to use certain words. You have to use those words a certain*

*number of times; otherwise they are not effective.*” See, then men are adding to what Jesus taught in all simplicity.

Jesus tells you, simply and often, that you are saved because He is the Saviour of all people, because He died for you, because He atoned for your sins.

How simple it is to understand that, if I cannot pay my own debts they will only be paid if some friend pays them for me! How simple to grasp that as the Friend of sinners, Jesus did that! What a simple thing that is!

But then men come to you and say, *“But you have to set up a certain system of religion! You must do this and must do that! You dare not do this, and you dare not do that! Here is a rule, and there is a rule! Here is this that you must do, and there is that which you dare not do!*

*This you must do to fill in the gaps where Jesus did not pay. Oh, yes, He is the Saviour! But He did not quite do it all. You see, by the sacrifices you make, by fastings, denials, penances, and other things you must pay for what Jesus did not pay.”*

Again men are adding to what Jesus said. Jesus said in John 19:30, <sup>30</sup> ***“It is finished!”*** Jesus work of redemption was complete. Jesus can say, *“I have saved you in love. Now you love Me. Because you love Me, you will serve Me.”* Here is the basis of love and not of earning, of giving and not of earning; here is God’s mercy and not man’s merit.

When people start adding to what Jesus said, how quickly there grows up confusion and difficulty of understanding what Jesus wants! The blind man sitting along the road was told not to pray because it was not the right time, was not the right place, was not the right manner.

When men start telling us today that there are so many things which must be done externally and in an outward manner before we can really approach the Lord Jesus, they are adding to what Jesus taught.

Jesus says to us in Matthew 11:28, <sup>28</sup> ***“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*** There you have His simple promise. Simple faith is all that is needed. Yes, if men did not add anything to what Jesus said, we would have a much, much simpler approach for many people to the Christian faith.

## 2. Do Not Take Away Anything

Another thing, others take something away. The disciples were going to Jerusalem with the Lord Jesus. They had heard Jesus say, ***“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem,”*** and they believed that. But they forgot the rest of what He said. Some they remembered; some they disregarded.

Jesus told them why He was going up to Jerusalem, ***“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup> “For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. <sup>33</sup> “They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”***

After three years of study with the Lord Jesus they should have known what that meant. They knew that it was God’s eternal purpose, through the sacrificial act of His Son, to give man an opportunity of going to heaven. They knew that! But other things came in and crowded out that which was important. That they did not understand at all because, in the second place, they took something away from what Jesus said.

That is happening today, happening so much! Men tell you that you must adopt the philosophy of Jesus Christ to live upon earth. That is true. And then men tell you that you must live the Golden Rule on earth in order to prove yourself a Christian. That is true.

But Jesus did not stop there. Jesus told us why we must do that. Not to earn heaven, not to build a stairway to heaven by our own good deeds, but because we love the Lord Jesus, and because in love we want to come to Him and serve Him.

Jesus has already won for us our soul’s eternal salvation, our heavenly glory and bliss in all eternity. He has won that and gives it to us, and He wants us to have it. Then He says, ***“Now that I have given you this, surely you can do no less than be grateful and thankful and loving to Me and so serve Me all the days of your life in love.”*** Very simple, is it not?

But then men say: ***“Oh, no! That is not the way which is going to work. You have to earn, you have to pay!”*** You see, men take away from the Scripture which says, <sup>11</sup> ***“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”***<sup>2</sup> They take away that He said, ***“the Son of Man has***

*power on earth to forgive sins.*"<sup>3</sup> They take away that He was God's own Saviour, sent on earth for you and for me.

They take that all away and leave us a Lord Jesus who is a fine philosopher, a fine teacher, a man who tells us to go out and do good, and be good and you will be all right. That is no longer Jesus' teaching, because something has been taken away.

Also we need to put first things first. The disciples knew that Jesus was very anxious to get to Jerusalem. In their zeal to get Him there they forgot the very purpose for which He was going up.

There was a soul crying for help along the roadway, Bartimaeus, with hands uplifted, and with sightless eyes staring at the blessed Saviour, asking for help and for mercy. There were those who were so zealous to get some things done that they forgot the purpose behind the whole. It was essential that Jesus get to Jerusalem. That was His destiny. He knew He would get there.

But Jesus had time to stop along the roadway, to stand there in the dust and lay His hand of blessing upon the head of that blind man. He had the opportunity and took it.

Maybe, like the Apostles, people in the Church today have come to a place where the zeal to clear out the path before the Lord Jesus, makes them forget some of the things that Jesus told them.

It is important to have things happening in the church. But it is not nearly as important, as it is to see, that some soul along the roadway of life is not denied the Gospel of the Lord Jesus.

Nothing can be more important than one who with sightless eyes of the soul looks to Jesus and says, "*Lord, that I may receive my sight.*" What was the result? <sup>43</sup> *And immediately he received his sight, and followed [Jesus], glorifying God.* Let us never forget why Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Our Christian religion is not an intricate, involved, very complex thing, but a very, very simple thing, in which we can find understanding and hope, in which God gives us the blessedness of assurance.

God tells us in John 3:16, <sup>16</sup> "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have*

*everlasting life.*” Do not add anything or take away anything from this. Then you and I will have this assurance.

So, in summary, understanding, and with it hope and joy, will and can come only if we do not add anything to what Jesus tells us, and if we do not take away anything. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 10:34, see also Matthew 20:21

<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:11

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 9:6