**Gleaner’s Sunday School Lesson at First Baptist Church**

**April 14,  2024**

**Unit: It’s All About Jesus:** For vision clarity, we must have clear lenses through which we see. Our “life lenses” are actually made up of our past experiences, personal affiliations, and opinions that can alter the way we see the world.  We must be careful that we see Jesus as He actually is, not as we might want Him to be.  In this 6-week journey through the book of Luke, we will try to see Jesus as He is truly presented apart from outside influences in order to follow Him with greater devotion and clarity.

**Session # 3: The Identity of Jesus (p. 39)**

**Scripture:** Primary Source: *Bible Studies for Life, the Senior Adult Personal Study Guide* Spring Edition 2024 or open your Bible to **(Luke 9:18-26)**

**Prayer:** Father God we praise Your holy name and  Thank You for the peace we know that only You are able to give. Strengthen each of us spiritually so we can put You first in our lives above everything else.   As we continue our study of Jesus’ ministry, I pray that You will make clear to us the true identity of Jesus and what is required to follow Him.  We pray for Your blessing on our families, friends, and pastors.  Comfort the sick, those grieving or  experiencing hardships, and forgive our failures. In Jesus' name I pray,  Amen.

**Question #1 (p. 39) What are some ways you like to introduce yourself?** Our author conveys his observations related to the concentric circles of our relationships, and uses them to demonstrate that Jesus breaks the mold regarding our relationship with Him. Those closest to us are in our innercircle, and the further out a person is in our circles, we can simply encounter them and move on about our day.  As much as a person might try to  keep Jesus in an outer circle, He demands to be dealt with.  When and how will people deal with the identity of Jesus?   Answering those questions is today’s focus.

**Point: Jesus invites us to identify with Him.**

**The Setting:** The opening verses of Luke 9 record Jesus sending out the Twelve to preach and heal.  They returned and reported to Jesus what they had done.  The crowds followed Jesus and His disciples to Bethsaida where Jesus taught and helped feed 5000 men plus another 10 to 15 thousand women and children with two fish and five pieces of bread.  After all were fed, the disciples picked up 12 baskets of leftover food. This is the only Galilean miracle recorded in all 4 Gospels. Today’s lesson begins later at verse 18.  Jesus had been praying in private when he turned and asked his disciples a question.

**Read Luke 9:18-19 (p. 40) Many had misperceptions of Jesus’s identity.**

**Verse 18, 19:** Jesus asked his disciples how others saw Him, although He likely knew the answers. They answered:J**ohn the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back.** Some thought John the Baptist or one of the Old Testament prophets had been resurrected.   Jesus is the most well-known and influential human being in the history of the world. For over 2000 years people have speculated about His identity.  Many misleading or misinformed views are part of popular culture today. Each of us must decide who we know Jesus to be.

**Question #2: (p. 42)  What are common misconceptions about Jesus in  our world?**

**Read Luke 9:20-22 (p. 42) These opinions about Jesus were rooted in what He had said and done up to this point in His ministry.  However, His true identity is connected to His ultimate mission.**

**Verse 20:** Jesus moved to a question of personal conviction and asked the disciples: **Who do you say that I am? Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.”** Peter often was the spokesman, the aggressive one, persistent in speech and action.  The Messiah would not be welcomed as God's representative by the Jewish religious leaders. These leaders rejected Jesus. This rejection led to Jesus’s arrest, trials, crucifixion, and in God’s response: Jesus’s resurrection.

**Verse 21, 22: Jesus then strictly warned and instructed them to tell this to no one,** … **It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day.** Peter’s answer was correct and incorrect at the same time. The disciples were gaining a full understanding of Jesus’s identity.  They were still thinking of the Messiah as a political kind of leader who would conquer earthly enemies and sit on a throne of earthly power.  Jesus provided one of the most clear, unambiguous descriptions of the true mission of the Messiah anywhere in the Bible. Jesus’s mission and identity is inseparable from the cross and resurrection.

**Question #3 (p.44) How is Jesus’s death and resurrection the key to understanding His identity?**

**Read Luke 9:23-26 (p.44) Jesus’s identity and mission are clear.  What must also be clear is how believers respond to them.**

**Verse 23:** Jesus called His disciples to identify with Him by following Him.  He taught three specific commands of what following Him actually meant: (1)…**let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.** First, all who **follow** Jesus must practice a lifestyle consistent with putting Him first. This relates to denying our own desires and replacing them with what God wants us to do.  (2) Taking up our crosses and living as God desires is a command and daily commitment to willingly give over our hopes, dreams, ambitions, talents, time and everything else to the Lordship of Christ. (3) The  third aspect of discipleship involves obeying all His commands; God’s grace is sufficient when we fail. The three aspects salvation are: First, *conversion,* Second,the lifelong process called *sanctification* (becoming holy), and Third is *glorification* that occurs at death or when we see Jesus.

**Verse 24:** This aspect of discipleship deals with people attempting to earn their own salvation apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ.  **For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it.** The word “life” can be  translated as “soul.” Everyone who follows Jesus will be saved, even if they lose their physical lives.

**Verse 25:**  Jesus addressed those who rejected His definition of discipleship in favor of their personal goals. Using exaggeration to make a point Jesus explained that even if a person could gain the whole world, he or she loses what is most important: eternal life. **For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself.**

**Verse 26:** This contrast **Whoever is ashamed of me and my words** deals with the obedience required of Jesus’s followers.  Being **ashamed** refers to disowning Jesus.  His person and message cannot be separated. **The Son of Man will be ashamed of him.**  Jesus Himself will reject that person as that person has rejected Jesus and the lifestyle He demands.

**Question #4: (p. 45) How does the focus on daily sacrifice help us understand what it means to follow Jesus?**

**Question #5:  (p. 46) How do we practically deny ourselves and take up our cross daily?**

**Summary:** We need to be prepared to answer personally and accurately the identity of Jesus.  He is God’s Anointed One who came to make atonement for our sin by His death and resurrection.  He is coming again in glory to receive unto Himself for eternity everyone who believes in Him.  That is the ultimate blessing of being identified with Him.  Jesus is God’s Son, Christ.  No other answer is sufficient. We are to obey the commands of the Lord.  Christ suffered and died on our behalf to deliver us from sin.  Jesus rose from the dead as the Lord Christ to give us victory and assure us of eternal life. To take up our cross means we willingly give over our hopes, dreams, ambitions, talents, time and everything else to the Lordship of Christ. We don’t take up our cross once; we do it every single day.

**Engage** (p. 46) Following Jesus means that we take up our cross daily.

A.W. Tozer wrote:  To be crucified means, first, the man on the cross is facing only one direction.  Second, he is not going back; and third, he has no further plans of his own.

What does this look like for you?

1. Facing only one direction.
2. Not going back
3. No further plans of your own

**Live it Out** (p. 47) There is no ambiguity about who Jesus is when we turn to the Word of God.  Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Savior of the World, and the Lord of all.  The question for us is, what will we do with that truth?

1. **Your Thoughts.**  In your own words, write out the answer to life’s most important question:  “Who do you say that I am?”
2. **Research Opinions.**  Perform an internet search for “Identity of Jesus” and note the varying opinions.  How do those opinions match up to the answers the disciples gave to Jesus?

     3. **Opinions of Others.**  Consider the people in your inner circle.  Ask them their

           thoughts of who Jesus is.

**Prayer**: *Father, help us to personally consider the question You asked the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?”  Help us see that this question is “the” question we all must answer.  Strengthen us spiritually so we can put You first in our lives above everything else, even ourselves.*

**Watchword:**  *May the Lord watch between thee and me while we are absent one from another.*