

=LIFE OF CHRIST=

Lesson 7

The Earthly Ministry of Christ

INTRODUCTION: We have discussed His preexistence, His birth, His childhood, His early ministry, the choosing of His helpers, and now we come to that portion of His life between His baptism and His trial. The following Scriptures summarize beautifully these years.

- I. HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD. Read Acts 10:38. No one knew our Lord like Peter. It was Peter who walked on the water, saw Jesus in His transfigured body, saw Him pray in Gethsemane, found the empty tomb after the resurrection, and saw Him ascend into Heaven. Peter is always the first named of the apostles. Now Jesus has gone back to Heaven. Peter is preaching Cornelius' house in Acts 10. He chooses some way to summarize the life of Christ while He was on earth. He does so by saying that Jesus "went about doing good." Notice especially the words "went about." He did not limit Himself to one particular community; He wanted to help all. Hence, He "went about doing good."
1. He was born doing good. He brought joy to the wise men; to the poor, humble shepherds; to devout Anna; and to the aged Simeon.
  2. He lived doing good. Think of the eyes He opened, the ears He unstopped, the lame legs He made whole, the lepers He cleansed, the fevered brows He cooled, the weak He strengthened, the children He blessed, the storms He stopped, etc. His entire life was wrapped up in doing good.
  3. He died doing good. There were seven "sayings" that our Lord made from the cross. See Luke 23. Three of these were made before the noon hour; four were made after the noon hour. It is significant that the first three had to do with "others." He was concerned about doing good to others before He was concerned about His own suffering. Though no one ever suffered like He suffered, He nevertheless thought of the needs of others, even while He was dying. Later He is going to say, "...why hast thou forsaken me?" but first He says, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Later He is going to cry, "I thirst," but first He says to His mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother!" After a while He is going to say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," but first He says, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He died doing good for sinners by forgiving and loving them. He died being good to His mother by being sure she was cared for while He was away. (Teacher, stress this to the children and young people.) He died saving the poor thief.
  4. He was risen doing good. In His resurrection body He did good. He brought cheer to the upper room, assurance to the doubting Thomas, and warm hearts to the Emmaus disciples.

So from Dan to Beer-sheba, from Jericho to Samaria, scarcely a village had not been gladdened by His presence. People crowded around Him, asking Him just to speak a word, just to touch them. Remember, though He was busy, He blessed little children. When He was tired late at night, He took time to talk to Nicodemus. When He was hungry at noonday, He took time for the poor fallen lady at the well. When He was on His way to die, He stopped and ate with Zacchæus. When He was being betrayed, He took time to put the ear back on the man whose ear had been severed by the sword of Peter. When He was dying, He took time to care for His mother.

Like the rays of the sun, He blessed all. The warmth of the sun shines in the poor cottage through the broken windowpane, through the windows of the rest home, the hospital, the prison, the army camp, and the ghetto. Everywhere Jesus went, like the sun, He brought warmth and went about doing good.

NOTE TO TEACHER: Ask the pupils what things they can do that would be good for others.

- II. HE WAS BUSY. The last verse in John tells us that the life of Christ was a busy one. Read John 21:25. In fact, it reminds us that if all the works that Jesus had done in three and one-half years were placed in books, "the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." In other words, His life was full and conveyed the sense of fullness of the human life and what it can be. Every moment of it was rich in its content, in its work, in its influence, and in its blessings of others. Our lives likewise should be rich,

full, and busy. We should make the most of every moment, realizing that we must some day give an account of every idle moment.

III. HE CAME "TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST," Luke 19:10. Here He reveals the purpose of His life.

In these three statements we find a summary of the biography of the three and one-half years of the earthly ministry of Christ: He "went about doing good," He lived a rich and full and busy life, and He came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

CONCLUSION: The following lessons should be taught to our pupils:

1. The big consuming purpose of our lives should be to win the lost, John 14:12; 20:21.
2. We should care for our parents when they cannot care for themselves.
3. We should work hard.
4. We should do good things for others.
5. Like Peter, we should know Christ intimately.
6. Like Christ, we should be doing good when we are busy, tired, hungry, betrayed, dying, etc.

Teacher, this is a way to close the lesson or introduce the lesson. Ask the pupils to summarize a person's life in one statement. For example, of John the Baptist, Jesus said, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." David was called "a man after God's own heart." Abraham was called "a friend of God." Call off several names and ask the pupils to summarize their lives in one sentence. You could use names such as Dr. Evans, Brother Hyles, Brother Colsten, etc. Choose some well-known names as well as names of people in the church that would be known by the members of your class.

Then ask them what they would like to be said of their lives when they are gone. What one-sentence summary would they want people to use in speaking of them? Lead them to realize that if they would have this said, they must begin now working toward this end.