

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“Let The Dead Bury Their Dead”

By Jarrod Jacobs

A dear friend of mine recently asked me what I thought about this phrase. This was something Jesus said to a man who refused to follow Him. If we are not familiar with the context, this may seem like a strange thing to say to someone. However, let us study this phrase and see what Jesus meant and make some applications to our lives.

The time when Jesus told a man to *“let the dead bury their dead”* is recorded by Matthew and Luke (Matt. 8:18-22; Lk. 9:57-62). In context, we see Jesus speaking to three men about following Him, and sadly, each one had an excuse (not a reason) for why they would not follow Jesus.

For example, one man volunteered to follow Jesus, but Jesus saw his intentions and reminded him, *“foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head”* (Matt. 8:20; Lk. 9:58). Evidently, this answer cut to the heart of the man, and we read of him no more.

The second potential follower (Luke records three men) said he would follow Jesus after he buried his father. Jesus’ answer was, *“follow me, and let the dead bury their dead”* (Matt. 8:22; Lk. 9:60). Luke recorded a third man who responded to Jesus that he would follow Jesus once he told his family farewell. Jesus replied, *“No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”* (Lk. 9:62).

What does it mean to say, *“Let the dead bury their dead”*? This is an odd thing to say to someone, especially someone that Jesus specifically *asked* to be His follower (Lk. 9:59)! E.W. Bullinger suggests that this man’s statement was “a euphemism for declining an invitation.” In other words, he was refusing Jesus but trying to say it politely. Perhaps this is why Jesus responded, *“follow me and let the dead bury their dead”* (Matt. 8:22; Lk. 9:59). Since the man spoke about burying his father, Jesus used this argument against the man. After all, what excuse can truly justify refusing the Lord?

What does Christ’s answer mean? How can dead people bury dead people? They’re dead! Some suggest Jesus meant “Let the spiritually dead bury the physical dead.” This sounds logical at first, but upon further examination, it doesn’t make sense to say let the spiritually dead people bury the physically dead people. Does this mean Christians can’t bury their family and friends when they die? Must Christians not mourn? Must they leave the work of burial to those dead in their sins, and how would a Christian know each person’s spiritual condition? Have we become judges now instead of Christ? When we examine the Scriptures, there are too many examples of godly people burying friends and family for that statement: “let the spiritually dead bury the physical dead” to be true.

When we examine Christ’s response in the context of the passage, we can see that Christ’s answers to the three men had to do with priorities. The first man must have thought of following Jesus as groupies think about following their favorite musicians when they go on tour. This man needed to be reminded that this “star” he planned on following had no claims to houses or property on this earth (Matt. 8:20)! Is he really interested in leaving his nice warm bed and his steady job to follow a person with no house or job? The third man needed his priorities set straight because he was more concerned about his home life and what he was leaving behind than the bright future with the Savior from Galilee (Lk. 9:61-62)!

So also, with the man told to “*let the dead bury their dead*” (Lk. 9:59; Matt. 8:22). This man needed to get his priorities straight! As Matthew 6:33 records, he needed to “*seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...*”. This man made his past a priority. He placed family members in too high a position in his life (Matt. 10:37-39), and Jesus reminded him of what is most important.

Friend, it is time for some self-examination (II Cor. 13:5). What are *your* priorities? What comes first in your life? Are you allowing the Lord to be first and have preeminence in all you say and do (Col. 1:18)? Perhaps you need to reread Luke 9 and be reminded to “*let the dead bury their dead*”!

I am sorry to say I have seen times when Christians seem to abandon what they know is right and change their priorities. For example, when guests come over, perhaps even to spend a few days over the weekend, do you make sure to tell your friends how you will assemble with the saints and worship God on the first day of the week (Jn. 4:24; Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:47, 20:7)?

Do you invite them to come with you, or does the influence of friends take precedence over worshipping God? Do you excuse yourself by saying, “We had company and had to entertain them! I’ll worship God when they are gone”? What happened to putting God’s kingdom first (Matt. 6:33)? Perhaps you invited, and they said, “No,” what then? Do you go worship God and tell them you will be back later? Why not? Perhaps Christ needs to remind you to “*let the dead bury their dead*”? Get your priorities in order!

When we go on vacation, do we arrange the trip so we will be able to worship with God’s people in that area? If not, why not? Are we not also Christians when we are on vacation? Do you excuse yourself saying it was too far to drive or that it was not convenient? What happened to Hebrews 10:25?

As students, do we give in to “peer pressure” at school or other places? Do we put our Christianity in a “box” and only bring it out on Sunday and Wednesday? (What about the adults reading this? Are you guilty?)

Have we forgotten we are to be Christians every day of the week, giving ourselves to Christ as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2)? Sometimes people excuse sinful behavior by saying it was the “group” or we were coerced into it somehow (I Cor. 15:33). Maybe it is time we went back listened to Christ tell us, “*follow me and let the dead bury their dead*”?

We may be tempted or pressured by people to:

- Drink alcohol (I Pet. 4:3-4; Prov. 20:1)
- Do drugs (Gal. 5:20; Prov. 23:29-30)
- Commit sexual sins (I Cor. 6:18; Prov. 6:23-29, 32-33)
- Steal (Eph. 4:28; I Cor. 6:10)
- Lie (Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9)
- “*And such like ...*” (Gal. 5:21).

We may be pressured to reject the Lord’s plan of salvation (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:36-38) and ignore His pleas (II Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7-8)! Yet, we are all responsible for our personal decisions (II Cor. 5:10)! We will answer to God for what we do in this life (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:12).

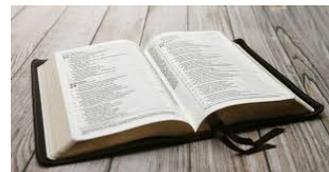
Will we listen to the Lord and get our priorities straight, or will we spend another day, week, month, or year wasting our time by listening to men? The three men in Matthew 8 and Luke 9 wasted their time by offering excuses to Christ on that day, and if they didn’t repent, they wasted their entire lives! Don’t fall for Satan’s lies! There is nothing more important than obeying Christ, and there is no relationship more important than the relationship in Christ!

Christ accepted no excuses when it came to those who refused to follow Him! He accepts no excuses today! Nothing is more important than following Christ while we are on earth (Rom. 12:1-2; etc.). Therefore, I hope we can see what a waste of time and energy it is to offer excuses for our disobedience. No excuse will be accepted! We need to follow the Lord regardless of what men think and “*let the dead bury their dead*”!

Memory Verse of the Week:

Matthew 6:33 (NKJB)

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”



“Watch And Pray”

Lesson Text: **Matthew 26:36-46.** “Keep watching and praying” (NASB)

I. The Meaning Of Watch.

1. Watch— 2. Metaph. *to watch* i. e. *give strict attention to, be cautious, active:*—to take heed lest through remissness and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly overtake one, Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:35, **(Thayer, J. H. A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament)**

2. Watching and Praying is not passive, unintentional, or automatic— but rather requires constant & intentional effort on our part as Christians!

3. It is required Of ALL CHRISTIANS!

II. The Practical Side Of Watching And Praying.

A. Jesus needed His Disciples to be with Him and “*keep Watch with Me....*” **(Matthew 26:40).** Draw Strength, Comfort, & Support...

B. The church is to be a people who watch and pray— Together.

C. Watch out for:

1. Temptations— Matthew 26:41.

— What happens if we don’t see the danger?

— What can be the consequences of not being alert?

David vs. Joseph— **2 Samuel 11:1-5; Genesis 39:5-13.**

The watchman for a city— **Psalms 127:1.**

— Prayer is a major defense against temptation and is our avenue of asking for help from God. Strong connection (joined).

— **Luke 11:1-4.** “And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.”

— **1 Peter 5:8; James 1:12.**

2. False Doctrines— Acts 20:31.

— Why? **Acts 20:25-30!** Apostasy is real, clear, and present danger!

— **Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:14-18.**

— The charge to elders & evangelists— **Titus 1:19-14; 2 Timothy 4:5.**

— And to all Christians— **Jude vs. 3-4.**

— What are the consequences if we don’t watch?

3. For The Lord’s Return— Matthew 24:42-44.

— Blessings for those who do watch- **Matthew 24:45-47.**

— Destruction for those caught off-guard- **Matthew 24:48-51.**

— Watch and Pray- **Revelation 16:15; 1 Peter 4:7.**

Conclusion— 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.



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And Our Facebook Page.

For sermon videos, articles, and announcements.

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Clois Wright, Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, David Taylor, Randy Beaty, Sam Johnson, Sherry Doles, Steve Switcher, Roy Robinson, Danny Cottrell (Dan's Dad). Prayers for the family of Dan Hunt (passed away).

Those Who Serve:

Announcements:	Jerry Kennemur
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:	Paul Johnson <i>Matthew 26:36-41</i>
Song Leader:	Russell Briggs
Lord's Supper:	Fred Johnson
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon:	<i>"Watch And Pray"</i>
Closing Prayer:	Tim Harris Sr.