

Sermons on John-Lowell F. Johnson

A Journey Through the Gospel of John Lowell Johnson

INDEX

TITLE	SCRIPTURE
1. John's Wonderful Gospel	John 21:24-25; 20:30-31
2. Heaven Came Down	John 1:1-5, 14, 18
3. When God Became Man	John 1:10-14, 16-17
4. A Man Sent From God	John 1:6-8, 15, 19-28
5. Hallelujah, Praise the Lamb!	John 1:29-34
6. The Man Other Men Follow	John 1:35-51
7. The Best Is Yet To Come	John 2:1-11
8. When God Cleans House	John 2:13-25
9. Nick At Night or What Does It Really Mean to Be Saved	John 3:1-10
10. Our Savior Like a Serpent	John 3:14-15, Num. 21:4-9, Cor. 10:9 37
11. Love At It's Peek	John 3:16
12. Make Your Choice	John 3:16-21
13. The Preacher Who Lost His Congregation	John 3:22-36
14. The Bad Samaritan	John 4:1-30
15. It's Harvest Time	John 4:31-42
16. A Portrait of Faith	John 4:46-54
17. An Expose' of Legalism	John 5:8-18
18. The Miracle That Got Jesus Killed	John 5:1-18
19. The Claims of Christ to His Deity	John 5:16-30
20. Evidence That Demands A Verdict	John 5:18, 31-47
21. Little Is Much When God Is In It	John 6:1-15
22. Fragments	John 6:12-13
23. When the Storms of Life Come	John 6:15-21
24. Reasons For Following Jesus	John 6:22-36
25. Jesus: The Bread of Life	John 6:22-36
26. Spiritual Defections	John 6:60-71
27. Jesus: The Talk of the Town	John 7:1-15, 40-44
28. The Joy of a Flooded Heart	John 7:37-39
29. The Salvation of a Shady Lady	John 8:1-11
30. Jesus: The Light of the World	John 8:12
31. Life's Greatest Tragedy	John 8:21,24
32. Like Father, Like Son	John 8:31-59
33. O, What A Savior	John
34. I Once Was Blind, But Now I See	John 9:1-12
35. Salvation: An Eye-Opening Experience	John 9:8-25
36. Jesus: The Gateway To Glory	John 10:1-10
37. The Heavenly Shepherd	John 10:11, 14-15, 17-18, 27-30
38. The Sheep and the Shepherd	John
39. The Eternal Security of the Believer	John 10:27-30
40. Lazarus, Come Forth!	John 11:1-7, 11-15, 17-45
41. The Tears of Jesus	John 11:32-36
42. A Portrait of Extravagant Worship	John 12:1-11
43. A Parade For Jesus	John 12:12-19
44. Sir, We Would See Jesus	John 12:20-26
45. Jesus' Thoughts on the Way to the Cross	John 12:27-32 Ps. 118:24
46. A Servant Moment	John 13:1-17
47. We Need Our Feet Washed	John 13:1-12
48. Wash One Another's Feet!	John 13:12-17

49. Judas Iscariot: So Close; Yet, So Far Away	John 13:16-30
50. Love One Another	John 13:34-35
51. A Cure for Troubled Hearts	John 14:1-3
52. Is Jesus Christ the Only Way to Heaven	John 14:1-6
53. Power for Ministry	John 14:12-27
54. How to Be a Fruitful Christian	John 15:1-11
55. Jesus: The Best Friend We Can Ever Have	John 15:12-17
56. Warning: Prepare for Persecution	John 15:17-25; 16:1-4
57. The Crisis of Conviction	John 16:7-14
58. The Advantage of the Holy Spirit	John 15:26-27; 16:7, 12-15
59. Sorrow Turned to Joy and Peace	John 16:16-33
60. The Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed	John 17:1-26
61. A Glimpse Into the Heart of Jesus	John 17:1-5
62. What Is Eternal Life?	John 17:1-3
63. Jesus Prays for Our Security	John 17:11-12,15
64. Jesus Prays That We Will Be Joyful	John 17:13
65. Jesus Prays That We Will Live Holy Lives	John 17:14-16
66. Jesus Prays for Our Sanctification	John 17:17-19
67. Jesus Prays for Our Unity	John 17:20-22
68. Jesus Prays for Our Home-Going	John 17:24-26
69. Drinking the Cup	John 18:1-11
70. Malchus: The Last Miracle	John 18:1-11
71. The Man Without a Fault	John 18:12-14, 19-24, 31-37
72. Peter's Denial	John 18:12-18, 25-27
73. Pilate Before Jesus	John 18:28 – 19:16
74. The Soldiers: Adding Pain and Shame	John 19:1-3, 23-23, 31-37
75. Substituting for the Substitute	John 19:23-27
76. I Am Thirsty	John 19:28-30
77. It Is Finished	John 19:28-30
78. At the Cross!	John 19:16-37
79. The Burial of the Lord Jesus	John 19:38-42
80. The Not Quite Empty Tomb	John 20:1-18
81. The Man Who Missed Sunday Night Ser	John 20:19-29
82. The Real Last Words of Christ	John 20-21
83. Eating Breakfast With Jesus	John 21:1-14
84. The Christian's Supreme Question	John 21:15-25
85. Lord, What About My Brother?	John 21:17-25
John's Wonderful Gospel	John 21:24-25 John 20:30-31

When you open your N.T., the first four books are called "the Gospels."

-They are placed first in the N.T. because they declare the Person and Ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Jesus is the HEART of the Bible. Jesus is the centerpiece of the Bible. He is found on every page of scripture. Somewhere in the shadows of every page of scripture, you will find Jesus.

Why are there FOUR Gospels?

-One reason is that we might get a fuller view or picture of the Lord Jesus. If I were to take a picture of you and wanted to get the best understanding of what you looked like, I would take a front view; then a side view; and then a view from behind.

Matthew portrays Jesus as the Son of David, the Messiah, and the King of the Jews. He writes especially toward a Jewish audience. His genealogy traces the Lord's family tree from Mary to Abraham. The key word in Matthew is "fulfilled" because the messianic prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He gives the legal genealogy of Jesus.

Mark portrays the Lord Jesus as the Suffering Servant. His gospel opens with the public ministry of Christ. The key word is "Immediately" or "straightway". It is an action word which indicates immediate action. Mark always seemed to be in a hurry. He shows Jesus doing good and serving humanity. His is a gospel of DEEDS; not words. He tells what Jesus DID.

Luke was a physician. He portrays Christ as the Son of man and emphasizes the humanity of Christ. He presents Jesus as a perfect man, contrasting Him with the sinful men of this world. He traces the genealogy of the Lord back to Adam and has the Gentile reader in mind.

The first three Gospels describe EVENTS in the life of the Lord Jesus. John emphasizes the MEANINGS of the EVENTS in the Gospels.

John pictures and proclaims the Divinity or the Deity of Jesus. He shows Jesus to be the Heavenly one come down to earth; the Son of the Heavenly Father being made flesh and dwelling among men. He proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God. He speaks of the eternity of Christ who became Jesus of Nazareth.

-John proclaims the Deity of Christ; yet, he uses the human name, Jesus, more than the other Gospel writer. Mark uses the name Jesus 13 times; Luke uses the name Jesus 88 times; Matthew uses the name Jesus 151 times, but John uses the name Jesus 247 times.

I. Who Wrote the Gospel of John?

Now I know that on the surface that sounds a little like asking, "Who's buried in Grant's tomb?" But actually, there's a lot more for us to know about John than just the fact that his name is attached to this gospel.

-Of course, we know that the Holy Spirit was the spiritual Author, but He always uses human instruments to do His work. So, what do we know about John, the gospel writer?

(1) The Name "John" means "Yahweh is gracious."

John is usually referred to in the other gospels along with his brother as "James and John, the son of Zebedee." James is most likely the older of the two, for it is always recorded "James and John"; not "John and James."

-John was most likely the youngest of our Lord's twelve disciples, being in his middle to late teens.

-John's father's name was Zebedee, a fisherman in Galilee; his mother's name was Salome, probably a sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

-Although the synoptic gospels identify the Apostle John by name some twenty times, he is so humble that he avoids using his own personal name in his gospel. Instead, he identifies himself and the disciple "whom Jesus loved" five times (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). When you see the name "John" in his gospel, it will be talking about John the Baptist.

-John writes as an eyewitness. He shares no second-handed information.

-John, along with Peter and James, made up our Lord's inner circle. Three times we see them together with our Lord: At the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the Transfiguration, and at Gethsemane.

(2) John's Position In Business

Before John met Jesus, he and his brother James and their father, Zebedee, were fishermen in Galilee. They were partners in the fishing business with Peter and Andrew. Since they owned several boats and employed hired servants, it seems their fishing trade made them a good income.

-Although he was most likely well-to-do and had real security in the family fishing business, he never regretted leaving it all to follow Jesus.

-Everything was changed when John came to Jesus and started following Jesus – his temperament, his loyalties, his entire being – all because he began to follow Jesus closely.

(3) John's Disposition

John and his brother, James, had a fiery disposition, so much so that our Lord gave them the nickname "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). They saw one casting out demons and he was not of their group, so they wanted to forbid him and to tell him to stop. Then at another time, some Samaritans would Not receive them or their message, they wanted to call down fire from heaven and fry them!

(4) John's Loving Admiration

Our Lord changed John's fighting, fiery disposition to one of love. In fact, our Lord so changed him that in his old age, he became known as the Apostle of Love.

-That's one reason Jesus entrusted Mary, His mother, to John's care.

(5) John's Personal Persecution

John is the only one of our Lord's Apostles who was not put to death, and they tried to put John to death, but God rescued him.

-Tradition has it that John was actually boiled alive in oil, but miraculously survived, although greatly disfigured. It was after this that John was exiled to the Island of Patmos where he received "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" in about A.D. 95. Later, he returns to Ephesus

where he dies around A.D. 98

II. Why Did John Write His Gospel?

The Gospel of John was the last of the gospels to be written, somewhere between 85-90 A.D.

-Mark was written between 45-50 A.D.; Matthew was written around 50A.D.; Luke was written about 60 or 61 A.D.

-That means that John wrote his gospel some 30 years after the other gospel writer and about 50-60 years after the death of Christ.

So, why did John write his gospel?

(1) John supplied a large amount of unique material not recorded in the other gospels.

John does not repeat most of the material that the other gospel writers give. In fact, John gives about 93 percent of new material, not found in the other gospels.

-John does not give our Lord's genealogy, the manger scene, His boyhood, baptism, temptation, the Mount of Transfiguration, or Gethsemane.

-There are no lepers, publicans, demoniacs, or parables. Not because all these things are not important, but because they are not important TO HIS Purpose and others have already dealt with them.

(2) John often supplies information that helps the understanding of the events in the synoptics.

The synoptics begin with Jesus' ministry in Galilee. They imply that Jesus had a ministry prior to that, but say little about it.

John supplies answers with information on Jesus' prior ministry in Judea (chapter3) and Samaria (chapter4). So, John wants to fill in the blanks about Jesus and clear up a few things.

-The other gospels focus mainly on the last year of Christ's ministry. John shows us events from all three years of Jesus' ministry.

-Even with that in mind, John deals with only about 30 days of the ministry of Jesus.

(3) John is the most theological of the gospels.

For example, John deals with the ministry of the Holy Spirit more than any of the other gospels.

-The Claims, that Jesus is God, are declared more in John than in all the other gospels put together. You may have heard people say that Jesus never declared Himself to be divine or to be God. That is not true. Both He and others declare Jesus to be God.

- In John 1:32-34, John the Baptist declared that Jesus is God.
- In John 1:49, Nathanael declared Jesus to be God.
- In John 6:67-69, Peter declared Jesus to be the Son of God.
- In John 11:23-27, Martha declared Jesus to be the Son of God.
- In John 20:28, Thomas declared Jesus to be God.
- In John 20:31, John declared Jesus to be the Son of God.
- In John 10:36, Jesus declared Himself to be God.

John declared that Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son!

Look back at John 20:30-31. The word "Believe" is used 99 times in the Gospel of John. The purpose of the Gospel of John is for every man to come in faith to believe that Jesus is the Christ so that they can have life in His name.

An infidel was lecturing to a large crowd, and he invited anyone who wished to do so to come to the platform and ask him any question which he had in mind. A man, who had once been a notorious sinner but who had recently been converted, came up to the platform. He took an orange out of his pocket, peeled it, and ate it, but didn't say a word. The infidel said, "Well, what is your question?" The man asked the infidel if the orange was sweet or sour.

The infidel stormed out, "How can I know whether it is sweet or sour. I have never tasted it!" "Then," said the Christian, "how can you know anything about Christ if you have not tried Him?"

I invite you to try Him out, to test Him, to trust Him. You will find Him sweet to your soul in this life and in the life to come.

O, taste and see that the Lord is Good!!

Heaven Came Down

John 1:1-5, 14, 18

The Gospel of John opens with a truth that is ESSENTIAL to Salvation.

-If what happened in these seven verses had not taken place, none of us could be saved.

-Jesus had to become man before He could save or redeem mankind. God had to, in some way, become man and, yet, remain God, before He could die on the cross as the God-man, so He could forgive us of our sins.

Here's how Salvation works:

- The Bible teaches that ALL men are sinful – Rom. 3:23
- Sin has consequences, and those consequences come with a steep price that must be paid – Rom. 6:23
- For man to become right with God, someone has to pay the price
 - You can pay the price yourself, but you will have to go to hell and spend eternity there.
 - OR, somebody else could pay the price for you.

For someone else to pay the price for you, they must meet certain requirements.

- They cannot be a sinner. If they were a sinner, they would only be dying to pay for their own sins.
- If Jesus was sinless, but just an ordinary man, could He die in your place? Yes. But He could only pay for one person's sins.

What could be done so that a sinless, perfect Jesus could die for the sins of the whole world?

-You see, because Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command, they plunged the whole human race into sin. Every person who is born on this earth from a sinful man and a sinful woman, is born with a sin nature. Anyone with a sin nature cannot pay the price for another's sin. It would take someone sinless to pay the price.

God loves us and wanted to come up with a plan to save us. Here is that plan:

- For a sinless child to be born, there must be an undefiled woman – a virgin
- Then there must be a sinless Father. You see, the sin nature comes from the man. It was Adam that sinned. No human man could meet that requirement. So God the Father said, "Here is the only way to solve the great mystery: The Holy Spirit will overshadow a virgin and rather than a child with a sin nature growing in the womb of the virgin, God's holy, sinless nature will be implanted in her womb. The child that will be born will be BOTH God and Man -the God-Man.
- Isa. 9:6 "For unto us a CHILD IS BORN, (unto Mary), Unto us a SON IS GIVEN (through the impartation of the Holy Spirit). And Jesus was born!

"Down from His Glory, Everlasting story,
The Great Creator came, And Jesus is His name!"

Why did Jesus have to come in the flesh as the God-Man?

(1) The Incarnation made it possible for Jesus to die – Heb. 10:4-7

God could not die; But the great mystery is that the God-Man could die for our sins.

(2) The Incarnation made it possible for Jesus to experience all that man has experienced – hunger, thirst, weariness, disappointments, hurts, problems, the pains of life – and so He is able to understand and help all those who are His own and are so tempted – Heb. 4:14-16

● Billy Graham looked at an ant bed one day and wondered, "How can I communicate with those ants?" He thought, "The only way is to become one of them." That's what Jesus did!

(3) By becoming man, Jesus provided us with an example of how a life fully pleasing to the Father should be lived.

(4) Through the Incarnation, God sanctified the value and worth of human life in a way that had not been done previously.

God's Son, the Lord Jesus, truly is Amazing!

Read the Passage

Three things I want to share with you from this passage about Jesus:

I. Jesus is Heaven's Language – John 1:1-2, 14

What is God like? All that we know about God is what he chooses to reveal about Himself to us.

-But, if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus

A. Look at His Person – John 1:1, 14

Did you notice that the word, WORD begins with a capital letter?

-Notice I John 1:1; Rev. 19:13

Jesus is the Communicating Word

The word "word" is used two different ways as it relates to Jesus: The Bible is the written word concerning Him and He is the Living Word.

A word – written or spoken – expresses the very thoughts and mind of another.

-Jesus expressed the very thoughts of God the Father. He exposes and expresses the mind of God to us.

-God spells Himself out to man in ways that man can understand.

B. Look at His Pre-existence – John 1:1-2

The life of Jesus Christ did not begin with His birth in Bethlehem. It did not even begin with His conception in Nazareth.

-It didn't begin at all! The life of Jesus did not begin and it has never begun, for He is eternal in the heavens, the ancient of days, without father or mother, without beginning or ending.

What does the first three words of John 1:1 remind you of?

-Think about this: Genesis 1:1 moves forward in time. John 1:1 moves backwards in eternity.

-John 1:1 is really the oldest verse in the Bible.

In John 1:1 the word “was” is found three times. The word means continuous existence... “In the beginning Always existed Jesus. What does that mean? That means:

(1) Jesus is Co-Existent with the Father

Man's language knows a beginning point and an ending point.

God's language knows no beginning or ending point. It is eternal.

(2) Jesus is Co-Equal with the Father

The word “with God” means to be face-to-face; eye- to- eye. It refers to perfect fellowship in the Trinity.

-Gen. 1:26; Prov. 8:27-30

(3) Jesus is Co-Eternal with the Father

The word “was” is found again in 1:14, but it is a different word. The word here means “became.”

-It doesn't mean that Jesus ceased to be God to become man.

-It doesn't mean that something was subtracted from Him in order that something could be added.

-It means that IN Addition to being eternal God, He also became flesh and blood man.

It means that He partook of what we experienced:

- We get tired; So did He – John 4 – He sat by a well, tired.
- We get thirsty; So did He – John 19 -I thirst.
- We die; So did He – John 20 – He died.

He became exactly as we are, with one exception – we sin; He had no sin nature and no sin.

- Rom. 5:8

-John 1:18 - “He has declared Him.” He helps us to see and understand Him.

II. Jesus is Heaven's Life – John 1:3-4

Jesus is the source of ALL things – Heb. 11:3; 1:1-2

He is the source of All Life – Physical life and spiritual life

-But SIN entered the world and mankind. Apart from God there is death.

-Notice John 1:4 In Him was life...Jesus brings life! John 10:10; Rom. 6:23; Col. 1:16-17

III. Jesus is Heaven's Light – John 1:4-5

Gen. 1:1-3 When God created the heavens and the earth, we are told next that darkness was on the face of the deep. “Then God said, Let there be light and there was light.”

John speaks of the light of creation when it was full of darkness; but there is also the light of conscious in man who is born in moral darkness and spiritual darkness.

-No man is born an atheist. Man is born with a measure of light in them – Rom. 1:19

-Man says, “There is a God somewhere.” God says, “I am the Light of the world.”

Four words are repeated over and over in the Gospel of John: Life...Light...Truth...Love This is interesting:

Life comes from God. When that life is revealed, it is revealed through his Light. His Light is revealed through His Truth and Love.

-What happens when the light comes on in our soul? If we respond to the light, we accept Him through faith and He forgives us and saves us.

-But when the light comes on in a soul and you see it! You see what you are, a lost sinner, and you see what God has done in giving His Son for you. He wants to flood your soul with His light.

But not everyone accepts Jesus as Savior when the light comes on.

- John 1:5, 10-11 Why didn't they receive Him when they saw the light? John 3:19

There have been times when I have tried to win folks to the Lord. They even get to the place where they pray and ask Jesus to come into their life. Then I ask them if Jesus came into their heart. Did anything happen in your heart and life, and they say, no.

Why? The Bible says that whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord SHALL be saved. I know God doesn't lie, so why didn't they experience the saving Grace of God?

I think it is because of one of two reasons:

1. Unbelief- They just don't have faith to really believe that God will do what He says He will do.

2. They love their sin too much to give it up.

I believe this is by far the greatest reason folks are not saved.

Some say, "I don't accept Christ because I don't understand it." No, you don't accept Jesus, because you love darkness more than light and if you accept Jesus you would have to change your way of living.

-You don't want Jesus coming into your life because His life and light exposes what's in the darkness and when you get exposed you have to change.

When bugs and rats are exposed to the light, they run and try to find darkness again. They don't want to be exposed because they love the darkness.

-Those who love darkness rather than light don't want to take responsibility for their sins.

Would you respond to God's light? Let His light shine in you and light your very soul.

When God Became Man

John 1:10-14, 16-17

There are many mysteries in the Bible – things hard to understand – but one of the greatest mysteries is what theologians call the Incarnation of Jesus Christ...When God's Son became man.

-I Timothy 3:16 "mystery" is a term used by Paul to indicate truth hidden in the O.T. age and revealed in the N.T. Age.

- God's eternal Son, Jesus Christ, became what He had never been before – flesh. Now this does not mean that He ceased to be God. He continued to be every whit God, but God accommodating Himself to the conditions of human existence APART from sin.

- God did not simply indwell a man. He became Flesh! Thus, in one statement, John avows both the deity and the humanity of Christ.

It is a great mystery that God made man in His own likeness. An even greater mystery, however, is that the sovereign God of heaven would take upon Himself the image of earthly man.

And the Incarnation took place when everything was just right for Him to do so -the political world, the social world, and the spiritual world - Gal. 4:4-5.

Notice Phil.2:5-8 "He made Himself of no reputation" means that He "emptied Himself" or set aside His privileges – His heavenly glory, His independent authority, His divine prerogatives, and His eternal riches – and took on the form of man.

-But He never changed His Person! He was God in eternity; He was God in creation; He was God in every O.T. Revelation; He was God in the womb of the virgin, Mary; He was God at His birth; He was God lying in a manger; He was God in life; He was God in death; and He was God in the resurrection.

-Jesus was not JUST LIKE GOD: He was God! Yes, He was like God, but he couldn't help but be like God. He was God Himself! He was one with the Father! (John 10:30; 17:22).

-However, for Him to become flesh, His godhead and His manhood must become one in some special way.

This truth of Christ being both God and man is too Big for our little minds to grasp and too high for our low thoughts to reach. By faith we accept this mystery.

- Some say that Jesus wasn't really a man, He just looked like a man.
- Others say He had the body of a man, but He didn't have a human soul.

- Others say Jesus was two people in one body – sort of half-God and half-man.
- No one can explain how it happened; or even how God can become man without ceasing to be God. But that's what the Bible teaches.
- Let me say it very clearly. God's Son did not cease to be God when He became man. He added manhood, but He did not subtract deity. He was fully God and fully man- the God-man. Jesus was God with skin on!
- Col. 1:19 "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."
- Col. 2:9 "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily."

I can imagine Jesus at twelve years of age, sitting in the midst of the religious doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. I can hear one of them ask Jesus, "How old are you?" He would answer:

● "Well, on my mother's side, I'm twelve years old. But on my father's side, I'm older than my mother and I'm just as old as my Father, for before Abraham was, I Am." It was like that all the way through the life of the Lord Jesus.

- On His mother's side, He got thirsty and drank water from Jacob's well. On His Father's side, He said, "I Am the Water of Life."
- On His mother's side He got hungry and ate food; On His Father's side, He said, "I Am the Bread of Life."
- On His mother's side, He had no money or possessions; nowhere to lay His head; On His Father's side, He owns the cattle on ten thousand hills.
- On His mother's side, He stood before the tomb of Lazarus and He wept with great sorrow; On His Father's side, He said, "Lazarus, come forth," and Lazarus came back from the dead.
- On His mother's side, He got tired and weary and fell beneath the load of the old rugged cross; On His Father's side, He carried all the sins of all men to that old tree.
- On His mother's side, He was crucified and buried; On His Father's side, He arose from the dead.

Three things I want you to see when our Lord became man:

I. Our Lord Revealed

A. His Habitation – John 1:14

Notice the word "begotten". That word is found three times in the N.T. (John 1:18; 3:16).

- The word does not mean that the Father gave birth or life to the son; Nor does it mean that the Son is inferior to the Father in the least.
- The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equal at touching the godhead.
- The word "begotten" literally means "the only beloved one; the one of a kind or unique one." He is beloved by the Father and has a relationship with the Father like no other.

"He dwelt among us"

- Eugene Peterson translates it, "The word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood." Others say, "He pitched His tent among us." "He made his dwelling among us."
- He lived among us, worked among us, prayed among us, suffered among us and died among us.

That means He felt what we feel

- Jesus knew what it was like to be hungry; forty days He went without food.
- He knew what it was like to be lonely and rejected. At a time when He most needed companionship, His friends ran away.
- He knew what it was like to be unappreciated. He healed ten lepers at once and only one returned to thank Him.
- He knew what it was like to be misunderstood, to stand at the graveside of a friend, to lose a loved-one (Joseph), to face death.

He also faced what we face.

- Heb. 4:15 – He was tempted in all the ways we are tempted to seek His desires over His Father's desires, to strike out in anger or bitterness, to lose faith in the midst of trials.

The truth is, Jesus not only faced the same temptations we face, He faced much greater temptations than we do. We think that because He was God become man, He had an advantage. We think that because He was sinless, He has no idea of the struggles we face.

-He more than understands. The difference between Jesus and us is this: When we are tempted, we often cave in. When Jesus was tempted, he resisted, and resisted, and resisted. He endured what we seldom do. He knew the FULL force of temptation.

B. His Manifestation – John 1:14

"We beheld His glory" Jesus allowed His glory to peek out when He was Transfigured and John was one of few that had actually seen Jesus' glory.

II. Our Lord Rejected – John 1:10-11

These are some of the saddest verses in the Bible. The word "receive" means "to welcome."

-John 1:11 the first "His own" refers to the world of mankind in general, while the second "His own" refers to the Jewish nation.

-They didn't welcome Him because they didn't recognize Him.

His own should have known He was coming. God told them over and over again many times in many ways. They had ample warning.

-Even some pagan astrologers figured it out when they saw His star in the East (Matt. 2:1-5).

-Moses said, "He's coming." David said, "He's coming." Micah said, "He's coming." Daniel said, "He's coming." And when Jesus finally arrived, they didn't believe it. And some of them decided to put Him to death.

The crowd shouted, "We will not have this man to rule over us!" And they crucified Him. That rejection continues in large part to this very day.

III. Our Lord Received –John 1:12-13

John 1:12 Has been rightly seen as one of the greatest verses in all of the N.T. For it tells us how to be saved.

Notice three key words in John 1:12:

A. Received

This word means to welcome a visitor into your home as an honored guest and to have Him make your heart His home.

-It means being willing to give him access into your life.

B. Right

This word means "honor" or "privilege". The moment you receive Christ into your life, God gives you the honor of becoming a member of His family.

-God only gives the privilege of being His children to those who by personal faith receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

C. Believe

This means more than just saying a prayer or signing a card. It means trusting Him with all your heart and resting on Him so completely that He is your only hope of heaven.

John 1:13 Explains how we become God's children. There are three "nots" and one "but" - all four are important.

(1) Salvation is not by Human Descent (not of blood)

Your family background doesn't count when it comes to salvation. Salvation is not hereditary. Just because your parents were Christians doesn't mean you are. Each person must trust Christ for himself. God has lots of Children, but no grandchildren. It is a personal thing between you and God.

(2) Salvation is not by Human Desire (the will of the flesh)

There's nothing you can do to save yourself – not good deeds, church membership, money.

(3) Salvation is not by Human Design (nor of the will of man)

Nothing man does To you or For you will bring you salvation. It's all of Jesus.

(4) But of God

Here is the heart of the gospel. Salvation is of the Lord. It is a free gift – totally of grace.

The only question before us is "Have you received Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?"

-“To all who receives Him” includes you. Won't you welcome Him into your heart?

Jesus must become not just A Savior...or The Savior...but MY Savior.

A Man Sent from God

John 1:6-8, 15, 19-28

Jesus spoke very highly of John the Baptist. In fact, He eulogized him on three different occasions.

(1) Matt. 11:11

“Among those born of women” - That's a big group... there is not a greater man. John was a man's man!

(2) Luke 7:24-28

There is not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist. This is our Lord's tribute to John.

(3) John 5:35

John the Baptist was "a burning and shining light". When Jesus refers John the Baptist to a shining light, He is referring to the wick in the lamp...not the light, but the wick. A wick is not noticed until it fails to function properly.

-The wick is hidden. It exists to be consumed. If it survives, it has failed its purpose. John the Baptist said, "I am not the light, just the wick."

One other passage I call your attention to: John 10:41-42

Everything John said about Jesus was true and many believed in Jesus.

Three things I want to share about John the Baptist:

I. John the Baptist: The Man

A. He was born into a Godly Home – Luke 1:5-6

Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were from the priestly tribe. Their very names are significant. Zacharias means "Jehovah remembers." Elizabeth means "the oath of God." God had solemnly vowed to send the Redeemer, and He remembered His oath.

-Zacharias was a priest and he married a daughter of Aaron, or a daughter of another priest. It was as if he were a preacher married to a preacher's daughter.

-Three things are said about them in Luke 1:6

- Both were righteous before God. They were justified before God.
- Both walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.
- Both were blameless before the Lord.

The only sorrow was that they had no children and they made it a great matter of prayer. Elizabeth was past childbearing age but God promised a miracle and John the Baptist was born.

-This is the kind of home that produces a John the Baptist.

B. He was a Humble man - Mark 1:6-7; John 3:30

C. He was a man of Courage – Matt. 3:4-10; Mark 6:14-29

D. He was a Forerunner to the Christ – Isa. 40:3-5

According to this passage, John had three responsibilities: To clear the way for the Lord, To prepare the way for the Lord, To get out of the way of the Lord.

II. John the Baptist: The Mission – John 1:6-8, 15

Five times John the Baptist is referred to as being a witness to Christ. To be a witness of Christ was John's foundational calling.

-A witness is to Testify! A witness is someone called to testify of what he has seen, heard, or knows to be true because he speaks from personal knowledge and experience.

Did you know that if you are saved, redeemed, cleansed by the blood of Christ, you are to be a witness? In fact, if you are saved, you ARE a witness. You may be a good witness or a poor witness, but you are a witness.

What does witnessing involve?

Is it just taking someone down the Roman Road or showing them the four spiritual laws or giving them a gospel tract?

-These things may be part of it, but it consists of a great deal more. It involves three things:

A. A Public Testimony

If we are going to witness for Christ, we must go public. We cannot be silent. There must be a public declaration of some sort.

B. A Competent Testimony

A witness must speak from personal knowledge and experience. If you have been saved, you can be a witness. Just tell what has happened to you personally.

C. A Dedicated Testimony

The word translated witness is the word from which we get our English word martyr. You back up with your life what you testify about. You lay your life on the line regarding what you have said about Christ.

What is your witness to accomplish? "That all men through Him might believe." John 1:7

John was to prepare the way for Jesus. He was sent to get people prepared to receive Christ.

-What we speak of Christ and How we speak of Christ should encourage men to believe in Him.

John spoke of three things Christ would do.

(1) Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit – Matt. 3:11

John declares that the baptism administered by Christ was superior to the baptism he himself administered.

-The baptism of the Holy Spirit could not occur until Christ ascended and it commenced at Pentecost.

-The baptism of the Spirit places the believer into the body of Christ – I Cor. 12:13

-It also gives us absolute, permanent soul security – Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30

(2) Jesus will Execute Judgment – John 5:26-27; Matt. 3:11-12

Three types of baptism are referred to in Matt. 3:11-12

a. with water unto repentance – John's baptism symbolized cleansing

b. with the Spirit – To place believers into the body of Christ

c. with fire – speaks of a baptism of judgment upon the unrepentant.

All judgment has been given to Jesus by His Father.

(3) Jesus' Redemptive work as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

III. John the Baptist: The Message – Matt. 3:1-2

Repentance was the key note of John's preaching. It was also the first message of Jesus. Repent!

-Repentance is the missing note in our day; and, yet, a man cannot go to heaven without truly repenting of his sins.

Godly repentance comes about when the Holy Spirit convicts a man of his sins and there is a genuine sorrow over one's sins.

-It is more than regret because you have been caught in your sin. It is a godly sorrow; a brokenness over your sin.

-It is a willingness to Turn From your sin and Turn To the Lord Jesus, not to turn back to your sin again.

-It is a change of mind and heart and attitude and direction relating to your sin and the Savior.

God presents the sinner with a choice. A decision must be made.

-You can choose to remain in your sin, which will lead to death. Or, you can choose to repent of your sin, turn to Christ and receive forgiveness, cleansing, peace in your heart and mind, and wonderful fellowship with our Lord.

Which will you choose?

Jesus is standing at your heart's door ... Standing and knocking, He's knocked before

This is the question you face once more What will you do with Jesus?

What will you do with Jesus? ... Neutral you cannot be

For someday He will be asking ... What must I do with Thee?

Hallelujah, Praise the Lamb!

John 1:29-34

John, more than any of the gospel writers, gave titles to the Lord, Jesus. Here in John one, for example, John gives Jesus eight titles, Just in this first chapter. He calls Jesus:

. The Word – 1:1 . The Son of God – 1:34

. The Life – 1:4 . The King of Israel – 1:49

. The Light – 1:7 . The Son of Man – 1:51

. The Messiah/Christ – 1:41

But the most beautiful title that John gives Jesus is, The Lamb of God. John calls Jesus the Lamb over 30 times in the Gospel of John and the Revelation.

-It is interesting that Matthew, Mark, and Luke never refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God.

In John 1:29, the words, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him," forms something of a bridge to the events. John does not record the actual baptism of Jesus nor His temptations by Satan in the wilderness.

-Mark points out that when Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens parted or were "torn open" and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

-Then immediately the Spirit sent Jesus into the wilderness for 40 days to be tempted by Satan.

-John does not record that. He builds the bridge between the two events by saying, "The next day." He is reminded of the sign that God gave him that the one he saw the Spirit descending upon was the Messiah; the Christ.

- "The next day," after the temptations and Jesus comes back to see John the Baptist, John says, "I knew who He was but I didn't know what he was – the messiah, the Christ, the Lamb of God, until I saw the Spirit descending upon Him.

-Now, as a group of Jews are coming to see John and John sees Jesus, he points to Jesus and says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

It is a sacred, holy moment. We are on Holy Ground. The Jews have been waiting and watching, longing for God to send His Holy One, The Lamb of God, and now John the Baptist identifies Jesus as God's Lamb.

-Notice that John does NOT say, "Behold, the Messiah of God," or "Behold, the Son of God," or "Behold, the Word of God," but "the Lamb of God."

-Why does he say Lamb of God? John's baptism confronted the people with their need of Repentance. But they needed more. They needed Redemption. The Lamb of God would redeem them.

Three things I want you to see concerning the Lamb of God:

I. The Presentation of the Lamb

Our God is an all-knowing God. He knows the end from the beginning. He knew when He created man that man would fall into sin and would have to be redeemed if he was to fellowship with God and live with Him forever. And, so, Jesus was the Lamb, slain before the foundations of the world.

May I ask you a question? "Whose hand shed the first drops of blood on this planet?" The answer is, our creator, for He took a sacrificial offering.

-When Adam and Eve sinned, they tried to cover their nakedness, their sinfulness, the fact that they were now exposed to themselves, and to each other; and to God, and covered themselves with fig leaves. God found them and told them that fig leaves would not cover their sinful act. The works of their hands or their human reasoning would never be enough to cover their sin. God would accept only a blood sacrifice on their behalf.

In Genesis 3:21, God shed the blood of the first animal, a sacrifice, and made coats of skin as a covering for Adam and Eve.

-I believe it was a lamb that God used as an offering and sacrifice, because in Genesis 4:4 it was a lamb, his best lamb, that Able offered before the Lord. How would Able know to offer a lamb unless Adam told him to follow the example of the Lord and offer a lamb?

The Question of the O.T. is, "Where is THE LAMB?"

A. In Genesis 4:4, the Lamb is Typified

Able brought the lamb for a sacrifice. God said that the life is in the blood and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

-The sacrifice of the lamb was ingrained in the heart and mind of God's people.

B. In Genesis 22:7-8, the Lamb is Prophesied

Abraham and Isaac go to Mt. Moriah to offer a sacrifice there. God is putting Abraham to a test: Does Abraham love God more than he loves Isaac? As they are walking together, Isaac said to Abraham, "Father, here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb."

-As Abraham and Isaac were going up one side of Mt. Moriah, a ram was going up the other side of Mt. Moriah, and God stayed the hand of Abraham as he was about to sacrifice Isaac and said, "sacrifice instead the ram that is caught in the thicket by his horns." That ram was wearing, as it were, a crown of thorns, a wonderful picture of our Lord upon the cross, wearing the crown of thorns.

C. In the Exodus 12, the Lamb is slain and the blood is APPLIED

God is about to redeem His people from Egyptian bondage. The night has come for the final plague upon Egypt – the killing of the first born. God's method of redemption is laid out for His people - note Exodus 12:3-13

Notice: For Isaac a lamb was provided for an Individual; here, a lamb is provided for a Family.

God wants His people to Personalize the lamb. In Ex.12:3, it is A lamb; in Ex.12:4, it is THE Lamb; in Ex.12:5, it is your lamb.

Notice that each family must take a lamb that meets certain requirements. It is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus – Ex. 12:5-

11-"without blemish" (perfect)...a male...of the first year (first born)...keep it up (watch it; examine it to make sure it is pure)...kill it...take the blood...eat

It (personally receive it into yourself).

-Exodus 12:46 do not break a bone of it

-Notice Ex.12:22,13 The lamb could be slain, the blood put in the basin, but unless it was applied to the entrance of their home, it would do no good. Jesus has died, shed HIS blood, but unless His blood is applied to our individual hearts personally, it will do us no good. EVEN the

precious blood of The Lamb cannot save us unless it is applied to our heart and lives.

-Lev. 16 – Two scapegoats were slain daily, one in the morning and one in the evening, were for the sins of the NATION.

D. In Isaiah 53, the Lamb is Personified

Very clearly Isaiah is talking about Jesus – A man of sorrows, despised and rejected, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, bore the sin of many – Jesus was the Lamb provided for the world.

E. In John 1:29, the Lamb is Identified

I Cor. 5:7 Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

John the Baptist was the son of a priest. How often he must have watched his dad take a lamb and sacrifice it. You can almost hear little John ask, "Dad, is this God's lamb?" Zacharias would say, "No, son. It is A lamb, but it is not THE LAMB." Now John stands and declares, "This is God's choice Lamb; God's Predicted Lamb; Behold THE Lamb!"

-This is the lamb that Abraham told Isaac about. He is the Passover Lamb Moses spoke of. He is the sacrificial Lamb Isaiah spoke about.

-He is OUR Lamb! Whatever else we glory in about Christ, let us glory above all things in His cross; His sacrifice for us!

Would you be free from the burden of sin

There's power in the blood, power in the blood...

There is power...wonder working power

In the precious blood of the Lamb.

II. The Purpose of the Lamb – John 1:29

Jesus came "to take away the sin of the world." What does that tell us about Jesus Christ?

A. Christ is a Saviour

He did not come into the world to be a conqueror or a philosopher, or a good teacher of morality. He came to save sinners.

-He came to do that which man could never do for himself; that which money or works can never obtain. He came to "take away sin."

B. Christ is a complete Saviour

Jesus TOOK our sins upon Himself and carried them away.

-He allowed our sin to be laid upon Himself – Isa. 53:6 "and the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."

-I Peter 2:24a "who His own self bares our sins in His own body on the tree." The sins of every one that believes on Jesus are made as though they had never sinned at all. The Lamb of God has taken them clean away.

How can that be?

-I don't know much about computers, but there is something I have experienced. It is called a computer crash. That means that, for some reason, you lose all that is stored on the computer. All information is gone. Well, where did it go? Usually when something crashes, there are at least some remains. Not so with a computer. It's gone, as if it was never there and you can't get it back.

-When the blood of Jesus is applied to our heart and lives, He takes away our sin. Our sins are gone; none remain!

What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus

Oh! Precious is the flow That makes me white as snow

No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus

C. Christ is an Almighty Savior, and a Saviour for all mankind

He did not die for the Jews only, but for the Gentile as well; not for a few people, but for All mankind.

-His blood was precious blood – one of a kind blood that will wash away all of the sins of ALL, but only to them that believe on Him will have their sins forgiven.

D. Christ is a Perpetual and Unwearied Saviour

He is daily taking our sins away from everyone that believes on Him – daily purging, daily cleansing, daily washing the souls of HIS people, daily granting and applying fresh supplies of mercy.

-Lam. 3:22-23 says that the Lord's mercies are new every morning.

-Our Lord's work did not cease for His saints when he died for them on the cross. He lives in Heaven as a Priest, to present His sacrifice continually before God. In grace, He still works for us, ever taking away sin.

In John 1:33, we are told that Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit. That means He places us in His church, writes our name in the Lamb's Book of Life, never to be removed.

III. The Praise for the Lamb

No longer is Jesus the bruised, beaten, bleeding Lamb; He is the Beautiful, Brilliant, Blessed Lamb.

-His saints will worship and rejoice with the Lamb throughout all eternity.

-Rev. 5:11-13; 19:1,3a, 4b, 5-7

Behold the Lamb, behold the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

For sinners crucified, O holy sacrifice, behold the Lamb, behold the Lamb.

Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon His throne:

Awake, my soul and sing of Him who died for thee

And hail Him as thy matchless King Thru all eternity

Crown Him the Lord of love: behold His hands and side

Rich wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified

Crown Him the Lord of life Who triumphed o'er the grave,
Who rose victorious to the strife For those He came to save
His glories now we sing Who died and rose on high
Who died eternal life to bring And lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of Heaven From yonder glorious throne

To Thee be endless praise For Thou for us has died.

Be Thou, O Lord, thru endless days Adored and Magnified.

The Man Other Men Follow

John 1:35-51

There is nothing more exciting than watching someone as they are birthed into the kingdom of God.

-Everyone does not respond the same way when they receive Jesus into their heart.

- When the Lord was dealing with my heart, I was a lost church member. My Pastor knew the Lord was dealing with me, but he thought the Lord was calling me to preach and I was fighting the call. He assumed I was already saved. I came to all the services. I sang in the choir. I did things around the church. The truth was, God was dealing with me to preach, but I wasn't saved. I knew if I ever got saved, I would have to preach. That night I got on my knees before the Lord, I gave Him my heart and gave Him my life as well to preach His word. It was such a sense of release in my heart when I finally surrendered to Him.

- When Tim was saved, he wept. He just poured his little heart out and the tears flowed.

- When Janice was saved, she cried but more than that, she and I rejoiced together and then we talked about how long the Spirit of God had been dealing with her and why she had not come sooner.

- I've seen others saved and they just looked up at me with a stunned look on their face, as if they couldn't believe that it had really happened to them.

Not everybody reacts the same way. But that's not important. What's important is that you have a personal, born again experience with the Lord.

Twice in John one, John the Baptist said as he pointed to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

-In John 1:29, John said it to the group of Jews who had come to hear him preach. Then, in John 1:36, John said it to two of his own disciples, Andrew and a young teenage boy named John, who wrote this book.

-These two men, along with their brothers, were in the fishing business together.

John the Baptist knew that his role was to announce the Messiah, then step out of the way. Once the Messiah appeared, his own ministry would fade away. He intended for his disciples to leave him and follow Jesus, and many did.

In these closing verses of John 1, five men would leave all and follow Jesus.

-Jesus was a Man other men would follow. What made Jesus the kind of man others wanted to follow?

I. Jesus is Magnetic

Most of us have seen and have been fascinated by a magnet. There is some power in that magnet that attracts metal objects. Not only are metal objects Attracted to the magnet, they Attach themselves to the magnet.

-Jesus has that kind of magnetic power with men. They are Attracted to Him; then they Attach themselves to Him; then they pledge their Allegiance to Him.

When John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God, John urged them to transfer their allegiance to Jesus.

Five men in John 1 are going to not only trust Jesus and follow Him, but they are also going to become His disciples. Jesus will use different methods in drawing these men to Himself.

A. Andrew and John are reached through the Preaching of the Word.

John the Baptist had been preaching, preparing the way, laying down the truths concerning the soon coming Messiah. Then when he sees Jesus coming toward him, he says, "Behold-look-there is the Lamb of God! Go follow Him, He's the One!"

-At that point the hearts of Andrew and John are strangely drawn to Jesus.

(1) The Interest of Andrew and John – John 1:35-37

The Holy Spirit used the preaching of John to create a hunger within them and a desire to know more.

-This is an essential component of salvation. The Holy Spirit begins to create a spiritual hunger within one's heart. He begins to bring conviction about his lost condition; his condemnation in Hell; his need of a Savior; his need for Jesus in his life.

-Being under conviction is a horrible feeling, but the day God reveals your sin to you is one of the greatest days of your life.

(2) The Investigation of Andrew and John – John 1:37-39

Andrew and John begin to follow Jesus. Jesus knows they are following Him and he turns to speak to them. He asked, "What are you seeking? What are you looking for?"

-Jesus didn't ask this question for His own benefit. He is omniscient and knows why they are there. He asks for their benefit.

-“What are you searching for?” Someone to solve your problems? Someone to make you feel better about yourself? A fire escape from Hell?

-Or are you looking for someone who will love you unconditionally? Someone who will forgive your sins, save your soul, give you eternal life, and provide you a home in heaven? If that's what you're searching for, you'll find it in Jesus.

-What you get out of life depends on what you are looking for in life. If you want someone to forgive you of your sins and change your life for the better, then Jesus is just who you're looking for.

(3) The Invitation to Andrew and John – John 1:38-39

Jesus invites these two men to INVESTIGATE Him. They have heard what John the Baptist said about Him; Now He invites them to examine Him for themselves.

-That invitation still stands. "Come and see" for yourself! Jesus has no hidden agenda. He'll

tell you up front it won't all be a bed of roses, but He'll tell you He'll never leave nor forsake you. You can trust Him!

These two men never forgot when they met Jesus! They never got over the day they were saved.

-John 1:39 John said that it was about the tenth hour. John was a teenager at that time. When John writes this it is about 60 years later, and yet, it's as real to him at 80 or 90 as it was when he first met Jesus. In fact, it's sweeter and better now than it was then.

-The old song is true, "The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows."

-Do you remember the time when you first met Jesus? Maybe it has been years ago, but you remember that experience like it was yesterday.

B. Peter is Reached through a Personal Witness – John 1:40-42

Even before the Lord Jesus told His disciples He would make them fishers of men, Andrew found his brother, Peter, and landed “the Big Fisherman.” The word for “found” in John 1:41 is Eureka!

-Study the life of Andrew and you will find that he was always bringing folks to Jesus. He brought his brother to Jesus; he brought a lad with his lunch to Jesus; he brought some Greeks to Jesus.

-In John 1:42, Jesus not only saw what Peter was, He saw what he could become.

-Andrew did a good day’s work when he brought Peter to Jesus. You and I never know what that person we lead to Jesus will become for the Lord.

C. Phillip is reached by the Direct Approach of our Lord – John 1:43-44

Our Lord becomes a personal soul-winner. He found Phillip.

-John is careful to point out that Phillip is of the same city as Andrew and Peter. Why didn’t Andrew find him and bring him to Jesus?

-Phillip is the kind of person that is easily overlooked, ignored, or forgotten. He is shy and quiet. He seems to be rather negative and pessimistic, yet, Jesus sought him out.

D. Nathanael Bartholomew was reached by the Testimony of a Friend – John 1:45-51

Nathanael was rather critical of Jesus because He was from Nazareth. Nathanael was from Cana in Galilee and the Galileans despised people from Nazareth. They saw Nazareth as being without any prophetic importance. Yet, Jesus told him what kind of man he was and what he was doing before Phillip ever called him.

Jesus never approaches any two people alike, but He wants every person to know they are important to Him.

II. Jesus is our Model/Mentor

Jesus set the example; in fact, He is our Example.

Jesus wants us to be like Him. He wants us:

- . To show mercy .To be forgiving .To have a redemptive spirit
- . To live in communion and fellowship with the Father

The Man who other men followed wants you to follow Him.

How could you say NO to This Man?

The Best Is Yet to Come

John 2:1-11

Read the Text

John 2:1 “And the third day” The third day of what? The third day after Nathanael’s conversion in John 1:43-51.

John 2:1 “There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee”. Let me give you an interesting insight in to Jewish wedding customs of our Lord’s day. Jewish law stated that a virgin was to be wedded on Wednesday and a widow on Thursday. The reason for this law was that the Sanhedrin (the Jewish judicial body) sat in court twice a week. They met on Monday and Thursday. If there was a dispute about the virginity of a wife after the marriage was consummated physically, the husband could come before the Sanhedrin the next day to make his case. If the husband could make his case, the marriage could be annulled or a divorce could be granted or, in some cases, he could have her stoned.

Did it ever seem just a little strange to you that Jesus would pick a wedding as the place to launch His public ministry? Or that His first miracle would involve supplying refreshments at a wedding reception?

-Couldn’t He have picked something just a little more spectacular?

-If I had been the Lord’s PR rep at the time, and knowing that He was about to embark on His messianic career, I would have advised Him to start right out with a big bang. “Lord, do something Big...Something dramatic...Something that would be a big crowd pleaser.

-Maybe He could heal a man born blind. That’s never been done before! Or, better yet, cleanse a leper! That always goes over big!

Or, if you really want to make a statement, raise someone from the dead!

Jesus would say, “I was thinking of turning water into wine.”

-I’d respond, “What? Why would you even want to do a miracle like that? Where’s the drama? Why, Lord. That won’t even make the news!”

Jesus is already declared to be the Creator God in John 1; Now in John 2 we see Him as the Transforming God.

-This miracle of turning water into wine teaches us about the transforming power of Jesus and the joy He brings to the transformed life.

-Our Lord’s first supernatural act proves He is the master of every imaginable situation.

-Jesus showed through this miracle that He has at His immediate disposal unlimited power to do anything He chooses to do.

Someone asked John Wesley how Jesus could turn water into wine and he answered, "Oh, that's simple. The water took one look at Jesus, God's glorious Son, and blushed."

-One man who was saved after being a drunk for many years said, "I have no doubt that Jesus turned water into wine. I've seen Him turn beer into food for my family and shoes for my kids and I've seen Him turn a man who talked and acted like a fool into a saint who lives for God."

Three things I want us to see as we study this miracle:

I. The Place of the Miracle John 2:1-2

Our Lord's first miracle was not at the temple or at a funeral. It was in a home where a wedding was taking place. Not at a fast, but at a feast!

-That tells me that Jesus enjoyed life. He enjoyed joyful, celebrated kinds of occasions. He was not a religious kill-joy. Some think of Jesus as a Heavenly Policeman in the sky and if He sees us having fun, He says, "Stop it! That's not allowed!"

-Listen, Jesus loved life. He said, "I am come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly."

It tells me also that Jesus put His stamp of approval on God-ordained marriage- marriage between a godly man and a godly woman.

-Jesus ordained marriage and He ordained the home.

-We're living in a day that says, "What difference does a piece of paper make? We'll just live together" What Jesus approved of was a public commitment of spoken love and commitment to each other.

Notice that Jesus was invited to the wedding, both He and His disciples. Jesus needs to be invited to every wedding and should be the honored guest in every home.

Did you notice that although Jesus was already present, He was not consulted until a crisis arose?

A lot of problems could be prevented or solved if Jesus were the Lord of the home.

-One of frustrating things for me as a pastor is that couples wait until their marriage is almost gone and then they want the Lord to come and do a miracle in their home. He can work a miracle in their home, but how much better to let Him be Lord in the home from the start and day by day.

Folks, time is too short not to build your home upon Christ. Thomas Carlyle was one of the prolific writers in literature. He was constantly producing materials for publication. In order to get his manuscripts to the publisher faster, he hired a secretary. In time, Carlyle and his secretary were married. After their marriage, Mrs. Carlyle continued to labor by the side of her husband. One day, it was discovered that Mrs. Carlyle had an incurable disease. Even after the diagnosis, she continued her labors by her husband's side. Each week she grew weaker until at last she was confined to bed. The day came when she died. On the day of the funeral, Thomas Carlyle was in deep dejection and despondency as he walked slowly back through the rain and mud. Almost subconsciously, he made his way up the steps to his home, through the door, up the staircase and into the room where his wife had spent her days of confinement. He slowly sat down in the chair by the bedside and softly wept. After a few moments, he noticed his wife's diary on the bedside table. He picked it up and read the entries. On one page he read, "Thomas spent several hours with me today. It is like heaven when he is with me."

On another page, he read, "Thomas Carlyle did not spend very much time with me today. I wish he would spend more time with me."

On another day, he read, "Thomas Carlyle did not come to visit me at all today. I know he is busy, but I wish he would spend more time with me."

Page after page and entry after entry, he read until he could take it no longer. He put the book aside, dashed out of the house, out into the rain and mud, down the street to the cemetery and at the foot of a freshly covered grave, in tears, he said, "O honey, honey, I did not know."

For the Jews of that day, a wedding was the social event, not only of the year, but for the couple, of a lifetime. Even the poorest families would save and save to make sure the wedding for their children was a special occasion. In that day the wedding ceremony would take place, but they would not rush off to the honeymoon. The wedding feast would last for a week or ten days and the party food and drink was to last for the entire time. Wine was considered essential to the joyous reception. To run out of wine would be a great source of embarrassment and humiliating shame. But run out, they did!

II. The Plea of His Mother John 2:3-5

Most scholars agree that Mary was related to this couple in some way and had some responsibility for the catering; therefore, she felt an obligation to deal with the shortage. That's why she felt free to give instructions to the servants.

-In fact, some scholars believe the bride was one of the Lord's half-sisters (John 2:12).

Notice the term "woman" is not disrespectful. It is the same term He used as He addressed His mother with from the cross. The word

means "dear lady".

-The phrase, "What have I to do with thee," could better be translated, "What authority do you have over me?" He is indicating that now their relationship is changed, now that He has begun His public ministry, from a Family relationship to a Faith relationship. There was only one voice that had authority for His ears and that was the voice of God the Father. Jesus could not consent to her authority. He could only consent to His Heavenly Father's authority. That's why Jesus gave her a gentle rebuke.

Jesus said, "Mine hour is not yet come." What hour is Jesus referring to? He refers to this "hour" seven times in John (John 7:30; John 8:20; John 12:23, 27; John 16:32; John 17:1).

-The hour refers to the hour of humiliation and suffering when He would be delivered into the hands of sinners and be subjected to man's will. Until that "hour", He was not to be ordered by men. He was to be about doing His Father's business, seeking only to do His Father's will, not Mary's or man's.

Mary's reply shows that she was not hurt by what Jesus said. She understood what He was saying.

-Mary's instructions to the servants indicated that she believed Jesus was going to do something about the fact that there was no wine.

Listen to Mary's advice - the best advice that could be given to men on earth: "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it."

-Here's the secret for any miracle: If Jesus tells you to do it, just do it! Sometimes it may not make sense to you, but do it anyway.

a. "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it."

-That didn't make sense to the servants. They didn't need water, they needed wine.

b. "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it."

c. "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it."

d. "Whatsoever He says unto you, Do It."

Jesus could have performed the miracle without the servants, but He chose to involve these men in this miracle as much as possible.

-They could not turn the water into wine, but they could fill the pots with water.

- He gave the servants an opportunity and the blessing of helping in the work of the Lord so they could receive a blessing.

III. The Power of the Master John 2:6-10

These pots were used for ceremonial cleansing - washing pots where folks would wash their hands and faces and sometimes, their feet - not drinking pots!

- Each pot held between 20 and 30 gallons - conservatively we'll say 25 gallons each. That's 150 gallons of water.

Jesus said, "Fill them up to the brim with water."

-It was to be a 100% effort. That's the kind of effort and commitment that is required in serving the Lord Jesus. If there is no "brim" dedication and obedience in our lives, there will be no "brim" blessings.

-Nor was it an easy task. They could not stick a water hose in each one of the pots and fill it. They had to go to the well time and time again, load after load, and carry them back to the house.

Notice too, that Jesus didn't draw attention to Himself, but spoke softly to the servants. It was a behind the scenes kind of miracle.

- He did not command the water to be turned into wine. He didn't pray over it or touch it. He simply willed it from a distance and it took place.

- When the servants dipped the cup in the pots, they got water. But when the guest tasted it, it was wine. Not just wine, The Best Wine!!

_ Jesus by-passed all the normal and natural process of making wine - cultivating, planting, growing, gathering the grapes, the time involved. It was an instant, full-grown miracle - enough to make 2,400 servings. It was a miracle of creation. Some will miss the miracle if they are not careful:

(1) Some see only the wine

- All some want to know is, was it fermented; if so, then it must be alright to drink; To draw that conclusion proves the depth of one's carnality.

- I'll tell you this: what Jesus made, you'll not find in any store in Mississippi.

- While I've never tasted beer or wine in my life, I'd drink all that Jesus makes, because it will not hurt you.

(2) All some see is the water pots

(3) All some see is the gentle rebuke to Mary.

The key to the miracle is twofold:

1) Jesus is in the Transforming Business

- He transforms water into wine and He can transform you and me into His image.
- Someone said: Nature forms us; Sin deforms us; Education informs us; Penitentiaries reforms us, but only Jesus transforms us.

It took a miracle to put the stars in place
 It took a miracle to hang the world in space,
 But when He saved my soul, cleansed and made me whole,
 It took a miracle of love and grace!
 We can be transformed by the touch of the Master's hand.

(2) Jesus always saves the Best till last...The Best is yet to come – John 2:10

- God and Satan are exact opposites.
- Satan likes to bring out his big guns up front. He offers his most enticing, appealing stuff in the beginning, especially when you are young.
- The devil is very good at packaging his wares. He can make very bad things look really cool. He slides it in front of you and says, "Hey, you've got to do this. You have to try this for yourself. Don't pay attention to the church crowd. What they say may have been alright for their generation, but man, you've got to live it up now. Don't miss anything. You're only young once and you only live once. Grab for the best now, while you can get it."

Listen young people: You determine the end of your life at the beginning of it. You decide where you're going to be 20 years from now TODAY by the choices you make and the roads you take.

- As the years go by and the experiences build, you begin reaping what you've sown. Gal. 6:7
- You can either reap the bitter end of living sinfully, or you can enjoy the sweet fruit of a godly life.

A woman was diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. As she was getting her things in order, she contacted her pastor and asked him to come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told the pastor which songs she wanted sung at the service, which Bible verses she would like read, and which dress she wanted to be buried in. The woman also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible. Everything was in order and the pastor was leaving when the woman suddenly remembered something very important to her. "Oh, there's one more thing," she said excitedly. "What's that?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important," the woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand." The pastor stood looking at the woman not knowing quite what he should say. "That surprises you, doesn't it?" the woman asked. "Well, to be honest I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor. So, the woman explained.

"In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, "Keep your fork" It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie, something wonderful and with substance! So, I just want people to see me in the casket with a fork in my hand, and I want them to ask, "What 's with the fork?" Then I want you to tell them, "Keep your fork. The best is yet to come."

The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She KNEW that something better was coming.

At the funeral, people walked by the woman's casket, and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing and her favorite Bible and the fork in her right hand. Everybody asked, "What's with the fork?" During his message, the pastor told the people about the conversation he had with the woman before she died. And he told them about the fork and that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right. Who would want to forget that we can embrace the future, a future of hope because we are in a relationship with God?

For the Christian, the best is yet to come.

If you're not a Christian, the worst is yet to come.

- I don't care how much fun you think you're having at this moment, or what great things you're experiencing.
- The Bible says there will be a reaping for what you sow. There is a future judgment and you will be held accountable for how you lived your life and- most importantly -what you did with Jesus.

The miracle at Cana took place because Jesus was invited.

- Jesus will never barge into your life - uninvited.
- He waits to be asked. Once you invite Him into your life, you have absolutely no idea the difference He can make in your life today.

When God Cleans House John 2:13-25

The wedding feast in Cana is over. Jesus, with His mother and some of His half-brothers and His first five or six disciples now walk down to Capernaum.

- Jesus is alienated from His hometown of Nazareth, so Jesus chooses Capernaum to become His home base. Capernaum was also

the place that Matthew was called to be a disciple.

The Jewish Passover was at hand. The Passover is when the Jews celebrated their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

-The Passover was celebrated on the 15th of the month of Nisan, which was around mid-April. Every Jewish adult male, twelve years old and older, was to attend three annual feasts in Jerusalem: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

-When the Jews were scattered all over the world, it was more difficult for them to attend the feast. Those within 15 miles of Jerusalem were required to attend. During Passover, as many as 2,225,000 Jews could be found in Jerusalem.

Passover brought a spirit of expectancy across the land. Jewish tradition required an entire month for preparation – the roads were repaired, the bridges rebuilt, the sepulchers re-whitened.

-As Jesus and His disciples got closer to Jerusalem, the roads became very congested. As they entered the gates of the city and the temple area, it began to look like a religious flea market – doves in cages, oxen and sheep in pens, rows of tables set up for the money changers.

-What Jesus saw was not something new. It had been going on for a long time and each year it seemed to get worse.

-When Jesus comes into Jerusalem this time, He is going to clean house!

Three things I want you to see as we watch Jesus clean house:

I. The Polluting of the Temple – John 2:13-16

Now get the picture: The word “temple” here does not refer to the Temple sanctuary. Rather, it refers to the Temple enclosure or the court of the Gentiles. It was the first of three courts or the outer court.

-This court was an area of about 14 acres. Fourteen acres is about the size of 13 football fields.

When the Jewish worshipers came to Jerusalem to worship at the Feast of Passover, they worshiped by doing two things:

(1) They would bring and offer a sacrifice to the Lord

They might offer an ox or a sheep or, if they were poor like Mary and Joseph and could not afford a sheep or oxen, they would offer doves. Jesus would have special sympathy for the dove sacrifices.

-Since many Jews who came to Passover lived many miles from Jerusalem, it was difficult for them to bring an animal sacrifice on the long trip. Therefore, they would have to buy a

sacrificial animal after arriving in Jerusalem for the Passover.

-In Deut. 14:24-26, God wanted to make it more convenient for His worshipers, so the Lord recommended that a service be provided for those who traveled long distances so they could buy an animal at the outer court. God intended it as a blessing for His people.

(2) The second reason for Jewish worshiper to come to Jerusalem at this time was to pay the Temple tax.

This offering which had to be paid was a half shekel, which was about one-and-a-half days wage.

-This money was used to pay for the daily sacrifices, offerings, and expenses in operating the Temple year round. This half shekel offering was a debt to the Lord.

-Because it was given to the Lord, no foreign money was allowed because it was considered unclean. No image of an alien king was allowed to pollute the Temple because God was the master to be worshiped and honored. The silver in the Jewish shekel was purer than that which was in other coins. With the Greek and Roman coinage as well as coins from all the other foreign countries being used, there was a need for these money changers. The changers were allowed to exchange the money for a 4% fee.

The service of providing animals to sacrifice should have been a blessing for those long distance travelers. It might have started out as a convenience, but somewhere along the way, the religious leaders decided to try and make a little profit along the way.

-A man's old sinful, deceitful, desperately wicked heart became more and more greedy. By the time of Jesus, the only animals you could sacrifice were the ones sold by the temple merchants. There was a monopoly on sacrificial animals.

Here is what was happening:

The law required that a perfect sacrifice be brought to be offered before God. Sometimes families would bring their own animals to be offered. No matter how perfect the animals might be, they were usually rejected by the examiners. They would “find” something wrong with the animal. The examiners would take their animal as a kind of “trade-in” animal and sell them a temple animal for as much as 30 times the normal cost of the animal. Then, on top of that, they would take the rejected animal and put it in the pen with the temple animals and sell it to someone else as a perfect sacrifice.

In paying the Temple Tax: Because Jews came from all over the known world, their coins would have the image of their Caesar on them. Those coins could not be used. The exchangers would, for a fee, exchange the Roman coin for a Jewish coin. The Roman coins would mount up and as the Jewish coins were put in the treasury, the exchangers would take the Jewish coins out of the treasury again and again and use the same Jewish coins to exchange for the Roman coins.

-The leaders saw a chance for profit, and the exchange rates were high. Jewish historian, Alfred Edersheim, says that at this time in

history, the priest were netting the equivalent of 300,000 dollars a year in money exchange alone.

That brings up a question I've been asked dozens of times:

-Is it wrong to sell things at church?

-No. Selling animals for sacrifice was even recommended by the Lord in Deut. 14:24-26. It is very appropriate if a church can provide things that can be a blessing to the people; such

things as books or recordings.

-The problem comes when the church begins to take advantage of the people.

II. The Purging of the Temple – John 2:15-17

When Jesus meets sinners, he doesn't meet them with a whip and harsh words. He meets them with compassion and forgiveness.

-In John 8 when the religious leaders drug the woman caught in the act of adultery before Jesus, He said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

-It is always the religious hypocrites Jesus has harsh words for.

It is easy to understand why Jesus would assert his authority over the temple at the beginning of His ministry. He calls the temple, "My Father's house" and "My house". He has great zeal for His house.

(1) Notice that Jesus armed Himself – John 2:15

The Lamb was a Lion! Jesus was not some weak, effeminate, sissy as some artists picture Him. He was a vigorous, red-blooded He-man! He was the manliest of men.

-Gentle Jesus, meek and mild is a concept that has been overworked. Don't get me wrong. Jesus is meek and mild, but we need to balance this with other descriptions of our Lord. He not only rewards righteousness, but He also punishes sin.

(a)Mark 3:5 When the religious leaders watched to see if He would heal on the Sabbath Day so they might accuse Him, He "looked round about them with anger."

(b)Luke 13:31-32 Some Pharisees told Jesus that He better get out of town, for Herod would kill Him. Jesus said, "Go tell that fox, I'm casting out devils, I'm curing folks, and I'll be here both today and tomorrow."

(c)Matt. 16:23 He told Peter, "Get behind me, Satan."

(d)Matt. 23:27, 33 Jesus called the religious leaders "whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones" and a "generation of vipers and serpents".

(2) He "drove the animals out...poured out the changer's money and overturned the tables."

He single-handedly drove the animals out and drove a group of evil men out of the temple, and not one dared to protest or fight back as they looked into His blazing eyes and felt His red-hot anger and His righteous indignation.

-There is no record that Jesus ever used the whip on people. Righteous indignation attacks the problem, never the people.

-The fact is, Jesus was as God-like here as He was when He hung on the cross. He was revealing as much of God on this occasion as He did at Calvary.

-You can tell as much about a person by what he hates as you can by what he loves. Jesus was the calmest soul who ever lived. He could suffer the most bitter insults without saying a word. But when the time came for Him to defend His Father's house and honor, He put aside His calm composure and gave vent to His anger.

-A man who never gets angry about anything is a man who doesn't stand for anything. You could always tell where Jesus stood.

-A certain man was continually asking, "What do you know for sure?" One of his friends got tired of this question and finally answered, "I know one thing for sure.

A snake can't straddle a log." I have known some two-legged snakes that could straddle a log, but Jesus never straddled any fence in His life.

The disciples remembered Psalm 69:9

Jesus cleaned house.

-It isn't always fun keeping the house clean. In fact, it is a job that is never finished.

-Did you realize that you can never stop cleaning house? House cleaning is a job that is never finished.

This is not the first time the Temple had needed cleansing. Several times in the O.T. The Temple needed cleaning or repair.

● 2 Kings 18 – King Hezekiah cleaned the Temple because the people were worshiping the bronze serpent Moses made in the wilderness. Hezekiah broke it to pieces.

● 2 Kings 23 – Josiah found the lost Book of the Law in the Temple. After reading it, he destroyed the booths of "perverted persons" or sodomites as well as the Temple prostitutes in the Temple.

Twice Jesus had to cleanse the Temple, once at the beginning of His ministry and once at the end of His ministry.

In the O.T. God had a Temple for His people; in the N.T. God has a people for His Temple.

-1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:18-20

-1 Peter 4:15-17 When we clean house, we need to start at home.

What pollutes our temple, our body? Col. 3:8; Gal. 5:19-21

-Do you need to do some spring cleaning?

III. The Purpose of the Temple – John 2:16

When Augusteen was tempted to sin, he would say to himself, "O, Augusteen, knowest thou not thou art carrying around God with thee wherever thou goest?"

What is the purpose of the Temple? Praying, Proclaiming, Praising

What does God need to drive out of your temple? Some habit? Some sin? Some Attitude? Some coldness?

Let the whip of the Holy Spirit drive it far from your heart.

Nick at Night

Or, What Does It Really Mean to Be Born Again?

John 3:1-10

I am convinced that if there is one doctrine that Satan would corrupt if he could, it would be the doctrine of the new birth. "What does it mean to be born again?"

-You see, you can misunderstand a lot of doctrines of the Bible and still go to heaven when you die. You can misunderstand what the Bible says about election and predestination and still go to heaven when you die. You can misunderstand what the Bible says about eschatology, the study of future things or last things, and still go to heaven when you die. You can misunderstand what the Bible says about spiritual gifts or speaking in tongues or baptism, and still go to heaven when you die.

-But there is one doctrine you had better understand and be right about if you want to go to heaven when you die, and that is the doctrine of the new birth.

-I have said that Satan would like to corrupt this doctrine. Just listen to preachers preach today and you'll hear a dozen different ideas of what it takes to be born again or saved.

-It really doesn't matter what MAN says about being born again, but it does matter what the Lord Jesus says about it.

That phrase, "born again", is a Bible term: 1 Peter 1:23; John 1:11-13; 1 John speaks about being "born of God."

-What does it mean to be born again? More importantly, have YOU been born again?

Let me talk to you first about:

I. The Must of the New Birth – John 3:3,5,7

John Wesley was preaching in a revival. Sunday morning and again that night, then each night through Thursday night, he preached on "Ye Must Be Born Again." Before the Friday night service, a man said to him, "Mr. Wesley, each service thus far you have preached on 'YOU Must Be Born Again.' Why have you done so?" Mr. Wesley said with a twinkle in his eye, "Because, sir, you must be born again." If you want to go to heaven when you die, the new birth is not optional. It is a must! Why?

A. Because of the Nature of Man – John 3:3,5

The words "a man" means any man and every man. The "must" of the new birth is universal and imperative.

-Without the new birth, man is Blind – John 3:3 – He cannot see or understand, or comprehend the Kingdom of God or the things of God.

-Without the new birth, man is Excluded from the Kingdom of God – John 3:5.

We can look at some folks and we can tell right off that they have a sinful nature.

-They are lying in a gutter, drunk; or they are living in some kind of immorality; or they have a filthy mouth. They need to be born again!

-But look at Nicodemus:

(1) He was Rich

Some have the idea that money can buy anything. It can buy a lot of things in this world, but it can't buy anything in heaven. It can't buy

life or entrance into heaven.

-Down here we WORK for gold; in Heaven we will WALK on streets of gold.

(2) He was Respectable

When he walked down the streets, people knew who he was and they pointed him out to their children. He was held in great esteem by all who knew him and saw him.

-It is good to be respected and to have a good name among men, but that will not provide you a place in Heaven.

(3) He was Religious

He was a Pharisee, which means "separated one". Pharisees were the guardians of both the written and oral Law.

-He was also "a ruler of the Jews." He was a master teacher, one with authority. His opinion carried a lot of weight.

-Not all Pharisees were hypocrites. Many, like Nicodemus, were deeply sincere, respectful, of a high moral character. But most of them were blind spiritually.

-He knew all about God in his head, but had never experienced Him in his heart. Like many, he would have missed Heaven by twelve inches – He knew God in his head, but not in his heart.

-He didn't know that something was missing in his life until he met Jesus. If you had asked him if he was right with God, he would have said, "I think so; I hope so; I'm doing the best I can."

-He was lost and didn't know it. He didn't know that he didn't know God in a personal, spiritual way. He thought he was right with God, but he wasn't.

-Many think they can BE good enough or DO enough to guarantee them access into Heaven.

"I've joined the church, attend Sunday school, sing in the choir, even tithe!"

-It's good to do all those things, but that won't get you into Heaven!

B. Because of the Nature of Heaven

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. You cannot get into Heaven until Heaven gets into you!

A lady came up to Dr. B. R. Larkin and said, "Oh, Dr. Larkin, I was just wondering, when I get to heaven, how do I get my robe over my wings?" Dr. Larkin said, "Well, I was wondering how you were going to get your hat over your horns?"

II. Some Misconceptions About the New Birth

Let me tell you what the New Birth is NOT:

A. It is Not Just Joining the Church

Folks think, "Oh, Preacher, I know it is not just joining the church." Yet, many who have not had a real salvation experience have joined the church, and, though they know there is something missing in their life, somehow feel they are alright and have a false sense of security.

-Some who have only joined the church without actually receiving Christ into their hearts, know something is missing in their lives, have too much pride to admit they didn't get it right when they "joined" the church.

-Satan will fill their minds with, "What will folks think of you if you admit you are not really saved? After all, you're so faithful. In fact, you are even a leader in the church – a Sunday School teacher, a choir member, a deacon, a preacher."

-I have had two young men who had surrendered to preach come forward to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. Both had joined the church, realized something was wrong within them and thought that because they had already joined the church, God must be calling them to preach. Then, they came to realize that God was not calling them to preach, but was drawing them to be saved.

-I have seen deacons saved, deacon's wives saved, older people who thought they had been saved a long time, saved.

-Let me tell you, what others may think of you if you admit you are not really saved will be nothing compared to how you will feel when Jesus says one day, "I never knew you and you knew you didn't know me, but had too much pride in your heart to admit it."

B. It Is Not Just Being Under Conviction

When I was about nine years old, I was under conviction one Sunday in a service and went forward. Instead of leading me to a saving experience with Jesus, the pastor asked me if I wanted to join the church and be baptized. Then, he asked me to fill out a card. He announced at the end of the service to the people there, that I was now saved and on my way to heaven. The problem was, I had not received Jesus into my heart. As a nine-year-old boy, I didn't know what I needed to do when I came forward. I came forward to rededicate my life to the Lord after that, because I knew something was not right within my heart. That went on until I was 21, when I was really saved.

III. The Mystery of the New Birth – John 3:4,9

The word "How" is used twice in these two verses. The first time it is used in John 3:4 means the Possibility of being born again and the second time in John 3:9 means the process of being born again.

Nicodemus wants to know, "Is it possible to be born again; to start all over again?"

-Keep in mind that we have heard the term "born again" most of our lives. This is the first time he has heard that term. If it had been your first time to hear that term, what would have come to your mind?

-He was thinking about physical birth. That too is a mystery we can't understand. How can we understand the mystery of spiritual birth?

Jesus speaks of the New Birth as:

A. A Divine Birth...and uses two illustrations

(1) He compares it to a Birth – 3:4-7

What is the "water" that Jesus refers to? Three possibilities:

- Some say it refers to water baptism, but baptism never pictures life in the Bible. It is a picture, rather, of death. It pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Salvation is through the shed blood; not water.

- Others say that it pictures the Word of God. The Word of God is powerful and it does cleanse, but if you take it in context here, I don't think that is the meaning.

- I believe it refers to physical birth.

1. Physical birth produces Life

-A baby has life because it is born. Likewise, spiritual birth provides a person with spiritual life.

-God uses the Man of God, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God to produce or birth His divine Nature within us.

2. Physical birth only happens one time

The same is true spiritually. Your spiritual birth is a one time for all experience. It cannot be undone and it cannot be repeated.

3. Physical birth takes place because of the pain and suffering of another.

Just as a mother enters the jaws of death, Jesus entered the jaws of death so you might be born again. The new birth rest squarely upon the pain of another.

4. Physical birth gives the infant a brand new start

-No baby is born with a past. They have no past, only a future! So, it is with the new birth. When you get saved, you get a brand new start. Your past is wiped away and a new, clean future lies in front of you.

-I heard about an old man who got up one morning and found his name in the obituary. When the man called the paper to complain, they said, "We'll make up for it in tomorrow's paper. We'll put your name in the birth column and give you a brand new start."

(2) He compares it to a Breeze – John 3:8

The word for "wind" is the Greek word "Pneuma". It is the same Greek word translated Spirit and breath of God.

"so is everyone who is born of the breath of God." As God breathed breath into Adam and he became a living soul, the Spirit breathes His life into us.

We don't know a lot about the wind. We can't see it or control it. We can't tie a rope around it or catch it in a basket or lock it up in a cell, but we can see the results and effects of the wind.

-When the Spirit comes into someone you can see the results and affects when they clean up their language and habits. Some invisible force has changed them.

-One evidence of salvation is the witness of the Spirit within.

B. A Dynamic Birth – John 3:9

How - What is the Process?

-The word "again" is "another" and has three meanings:

(1) Again= a brand new birth from a heavenly source. It is an act of God whereby eternal life is imparted.

(2) From Above – Rom. 8:9b,16

Rom. 8:9b Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

(3) Anew – 2 Cor. 5:17

2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

IV. The Merit of the New Birth

Jesus offers you the same privilege He offered Nicodemus 2,000 years ago.

-Satan tries to make men think that salvation is something to be feared, to be put off as long as possible, something that you don't want. He wants you to hang on to your old life, even when you know better.

-What if you don't come to Jesus – John 3:18, 36; Matt. 7:21-23; Matt. 25:41

Joh 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Mat 7:21 Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Mat 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

-God's promise: "Him that cometh to me, I will never cast out."

Our Savior Like A Serpent

John 3:14-15; Numbers 21:4-9; I Cor. 10:9

You may look at the sermon title with a question mark. How could our Savior be like a serpent?

-The first time we see a serpent in the Bible is in Gen. 3, and the serpent represents Satan and sin and tempts Eve to sin.

-Gen. 3 is the first time we see the serpent. The last time we see the serpent is in Rev. 20 and he is being cast into the lake of fire.

Or, you may look at the sermon title with an exclamation point; for Christ was made sin for us and just as those who were bitten by the fiery serpents could look to the brazen serpent on the pole and live; just so, all who look to Jesus who is lifted up for our sins will live.

Remember that in John 3 Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about being born again. Twice he asked Jesus "how" a person could be born again.

1. In John 3:4, he asked Jesus how was this Possible. He wants to know about the possibility of new birth.

2. Then, in John 3:9, he asked again, "How can these things be?" he asked about the procedure of the new birth.

Now Jesus uses an O.T. event that Nicodemus would be familiar with.

-God had led the nation of Israel out of Egypt and had promised to take them to the Promised Land. But God put His people to a test at Kadesh-Barnea. They sent 12 spies to spy out the land and came back with an evil report. Because of this, God told them they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years until the old generation died out and a new generation was raised up.

-They had been in the wilderness for some 38 years. Most of the old generation had died out, but not all of them. Some of the old generation were still present until Numbers 26. What would the new generation be like? Actually, the new generation was not much different from the old generation.

-For 38 years, God had led them and fed them, but the children of Israel had gotten tired of both the leading and the feeding of God and they began to murmur, complain and gripe against the Lord and against their leaders. And when they did, God sent a judgment to the people in the form of these fiery serpents. But with the punishment came the pardon. That's the wonderful truth I want you to see in these passages.

The story of Numbers 21:4-9 was certainly familiar to Nicodemus.

1. It was a story of SIN, for the nation rebelled against God and had to be punished. God sent fiery serpents that bit the people so that many died.

2. It is also a story of GRACE, for Moses interceded for the people and God provided a remedy. He told Moses to make a brass serpent and lift it up on a pole for all to see. Any stricken person who looked at the serpent would immediately be healed.

3. It is also a story of Faith: when the people looked by faith, they were saved.

I. The Defiant Sinners

What did these people do that was so terrible and so horrible that God would unleash these fiery serpents to attack them and to kill them?

A. They Reviled God's Person

One of the things these people knew how to do and do well was gripe and complain. That's about all they had done for 38 years. Listen to the record:

Num 11:1 And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

Num 14:2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

Num 16:41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

Num 17:12 And the children of Israel spoke unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish.

- At least 8 times they charged Moses with wanting to kill them.

Up until now they had only spoken against the leadership – Moses and Aaron – but now notice what happens in Num. 21:5. “And the people spake against God.”

B. They Rejected God's Prophet - Num. 21:5 (and against Moses)

C. They Renounced God's Provision – Num. 21:5

-One translation reads: “We are sick and tired of this junk food; this bread you're giving us.”

-That bread, the manna, was a type of Christ. John 6:41 Jesus said, “I am the bread which came down from Heaven.”

II. The Deadly Serpents

To understand what is going on here, it is important to recognize that neither the judgment nor the remedy was a random phenomenon.

-It's not as if the Lord saw His people sinning and then said to Himself, “Now what shall I afflict them with today? I think I'll send snakes! I haven't tried that punishment before.”

-Nor was the form of the judgment simply due to the fact that snakes were a convenient commodity with which to afflict people in that part of the desert.

-Rather, it was a sign that was full of meaning for the Israelites.

Why snakes? Because snakes speak of both Satan and sin. The serpent is a symbol of Satan himself. It was in the form of a serpent that Satan deceived Eve and brought about the sin that caused them to be cast out of the garden and into this fallen world.

-The wilderness of Paran was a place covered with fiery serpents. But up until this time the people had been protected by God. Now, God loosed them. They were in God's control. God could allow them to strike or refuse to allow them to.

What does sin do?

-It does what a desert snake does. The color of the snake may be beautiful, but it sneaks, it strikes, it brings unspeakable pain and then it kills.

-Sin degrades, hurts, shames, damages and damns everything it touches.

-Hear the screams, feel the pain, sense the fear, see the dying – all because of sin!

III. The Desperate Situation – Num. 21:6

My mother was bitten by a rattlesnake when she was 10 or 12 years old one night while she was looking for a pair of work gloves. It took them about three hours to get her to a doctor. They drew a pint and a quart of poison from her arm.

Description of one bitten: The tongue would contract; the throat would begin to close up. It would not be long until one could not speak

with clarity. Then the hearing would be affected. Sounds would seem to be distant until one could no longer hear. Eyes begin to fail; sight becomes night. The heart slows down until it stops.

This account reminds us of man's plight today.

(1) The sting of the serpent's bite was death. The sting of sin is death. The whole world had been bitten by sin.

1Co 15:56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(2) There was no medical aid in the wilderness for a bite. The human race offers no effective cure for the bite of sin.

Tit 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

(3) People died from the bites. Notice Num. 21:7. The snakes were not the ROOT of the problem; the snakes were the FRUIT of the problem. Sin is at the root of our problem.

IV. The Divine Solution – Num. 21:7-9; John 3:14

Moses prayed – interceded – for the people, and God gave them a strange remedy.

We see the point of the symbolism when we come to the N.T.

This is a story about Jesus.

-Why was Moses told to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole and lift it up? A snake is the symbol of sin and the pole being lifted up is a symbol of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was lifted up on the cross.

-Sometimes we see Jesus on the cross and we adore Him as the Lamb of God who is dying for our sin, but sometimes we forget that on the cross, the Lamb of God bore our sins. He took my sin and your sin upon Himself. He bore in His body our sins on the tree.

-I think the reason God directed Moses to make a snake and put it upon a pole is because God

wanted us to see what Jesus bore for us.

-God laid upon Jesus the iniquities of us all. He who knew no sin became sin for us. The snake was symbolic of Jesus carrying our sins.

Look how this Brazen Serpent is a picture of Christ

1.The brazen serpent was made like a fiery serpent, yet, without a sting. Christ was made like unto sinful man, yet without sin. 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3

2.Brass in the Bible is a symbol or picture of judgment. The judgment of God was upon Jesus Christ because He bore our sins.

3.Both the serpent and Christ were lifted up as objects of faith and deliverance to those who were dying.

How can Christ, pure and sinless, be portrayed as a portrait of evil?

- When we look at the cross, we see sin's depravity. When we look at the cross and see the wounds, the blood, the bruises, the tears, and even the joy of His lying murderers – we see sin in all its raw horror.
- Calvary should forever be stamped upon our minds, showing us the depths of evil we are all capable of.
- When we see the snake on the pole, we see Satan at the cross, mocking Christ. If you saw the movie, The Passion of the Christ, you saw a snake wrapped around the arms of the cross, his head next to the ear of Christ as if he were whispering in His ear and had a smirk on his face.

The verb "lifted up" has a dual meaning: To be crucified (John 8:28; John 12:32-34) and to be glorified and exalted. In his gospel, John points out that our Lord's crucifixion was actually the means of His glorification (John 12:23ff). The cross was not the end of His glory, it was the means of His glory.

Act 2:33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Look at the simple requirement – Num. 21:8-9

-The serpent on the pole was not a magical cure for snakebite. It was a sign that worked by taking the Lord at His word through faith. The people were to look intently at the bronze serpent, putting their trust in the power of the Lord's victory over evil, and then they would be healed.

-You couldn't look intently at the bronze serpent and at something else as well.

The truth is, we are constantly being bitten by sin, as it were, so we must constantly look to the cross for healing.

Each man had to look for himself. No man could look for the benefit of another.

-It was not enough to know about the serpent. You had to look upon it in faith.

-Each person must come to Christ in faith on the Lord's terms.

Knowing about the Lord is not enough to save you from your sins.

-The people did not die because they were bitten, but because they did not look. We do not die in our sins and stand guilty before a holy God because Adam sinned and gave us a sin nature. Nor, do we die in our sins because we sin. If we die in our sins, it is because we do not look in faith to the Lord Jesus.

This was God's ONLY remedy. Nobody looked and still died. Everybody who looked lived.

-The cure was instantaneous. The moment they looked was the moment they lived. And it didn't matter where they were bitten or how often they were bitten. If they looked, they lived.

Love Is at Its Peek

John 3:16

John 3:16 is the magnifying glass of God's love for mankind. If there is one verse that summarized the heart of God and the heart of the Bible, this would be the verse. John 3:16 is the heart of revealed truth.

THE great truth of God's word is GOD LOVES YOU, PERSONALLY!

John 3:16 is not talking about human love, which is often biased and often impure as to its motives. THIS IS GOD'S LOVE!

-Human love is selfish and is usually given on the basis of what it can hope to receive in return!

-God's love is not like that at all! His love is always pure, always holy, always seeking what is best for the one who is loved. His love is given freely without the hope of desire for anything in return.

-God loves because He IS love! His love is Never ending!

-Jer. 31:3 "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; with loving kindness have I drawn you."

-I John 4:19 "We love Him because He first loved us."

God's love is Amazing Love!

The great German theologian, Carl Barth, was speaking in one of our seminaries and after his speech the president of the seminary said, "We have time for questions. If you would like to ask Dr. Barth a question, please raise your hand and do so." One student stood and asked, "Dr. Barth, could you share with us the deepest spiritual truth that you have learned over the years of studying the Word of God?" Dr. Barth thought for a moment and then said, "The most profound truth that I know is that God loves me."

He had no sooner spoken the words that the truth of those words really touched his heart and he said a second time, "God loves me!" Then he went to one knee and with tears in his eyes he said, "O, God loves me!"

The greatest truth you can know is that GOD loves you.

-I say that because our world is filled with folks who think, "Nobody loves me." I have met young people who feel that way and divorcees who feel that way. May I assure you: God loves you!

The song writer said:

There's the wonder of sunset at evening,
The wonder of sunrise I see
But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul,
Is the wonder that God loves me.

Some years ago, a 17 year old young man had just finished high school. He came from a well-to-do family. He had already been accepted into a fine college. His parents told him to go to a car lot and pick out the car he wanted as their graduation gift to him. Not many weeks after that, he went to his house, got a water hose, and went down a pasture road.

With a tank full of gas, he put one end of the hose in the exhaust pipe of his new car and the other end inside the front window. They found his body with a note he had written which read: "I have discovered that nobody loves me. My parents do not love me. I don't think that even God loves me. I don't love myself. It would be better for everyone if I did not exist," and he signed the letter. If he had only

known how much God loved him!

Would you look with me at John 3:16 and see?

I. The Size of God's Love

The biggest word in the bible is that little word, "So." It indicates the depth of God's love.

-It describes the scope of God's love for fallen men. It is a deep love that motivated God to send His only begotten Son to die for the lost.

-It is uncommon love, for this is God's love! This is no ordinary love. It is a special love that seeks to give itself away, even for sinful men. Even to those who think, "I'm too sinful or I'm too ugly, or I'm not smart enough or I'm not worthy." God loves you!

This should not surprise us, because to love is the very nature of God, I John 4:8,16

-The greatest thought to grip the human mind is this: "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so!" Jesus loves me when I'm good, and it makes Him very glad. Jesus loves me when I'm bad, though it makes Him very sad.

-The second greatest thought is this: There is nothing you can do to make Him stop loving you Rom. 8:38-39

The true value of love lies in what love is willing to give to the one loved.

-You see, God's love is not stagnant or self-centered. His love doesn't just sit quietly by while men drop off into hell! His love prompted Him to do something for the people He loves.

-God's love is seen in the giving of His precious son to die for sinners on the cross.

-Rom. 5:8; I John 4:9-10; I John 3:16; I Peter 3:18

If you want to see what God's love is like, go to the cross – Eph. 3:18-19

II. The Eyes of God's Love

"For God so loved THE WORLD". What are God's eyes focused on? Not nature, the world of the trees, woods, mountains, ect.

In spite of man's sinful condition and the fact that the natural man hates God and opposes all God stands for, God still saw value in human life.

Man doesn't see much value in human life, but God does. The value man sees in human life is seen in the number of abortion and euthanasia and the spiraling crime of murder and abuse.

God's eyes miss no one. Sometimes we overlook folks or neglect folks or try to avoid folks or have nothing to do with some "kinds" of folks. Not so Jesus!

-In Jesus' day children were overlooked. In fact, even the disciples thought Jesus didn't have time for children and even tried to shoo them away. Yet, Jesus said, "Forbid not the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God." Jesus always had time for children and He loved them.

-People that other folks hated, like Zacchaeus, Jesus saw and loved.

Most folks didn't like Zacchaeus because of who he was and what he was and would have as little to do with him as possible; yet, Jesus called him unto Himself and even went home with him for a fellowship meal.

-Folks with physical ills, like blind folks, cripples, lepers, Jesus saw. He saw folks with mental ills. He saw the down and out as well as the up and out.

-He saw the spiritually outcast. Like the prodigal son's father whose eyes were always looking for his son and when he saw him, ran to him and treated him with great love and care. His eyes are always looking for those to love.

-God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love.

In fact, Jesus said that "whosoever" believes on Him could be saved. "Whosoever" means any race, any language, any nationality.

-I John 2:2; Rom. 10:13

I am happy today and the Son shines bright,
And Clouds have been rolled away;
For the Savior said, whosoever will
May come with Him to stay.

O, what wonderful love, O, what grace divine,
That Jesus should die for me;
I've been lifted up, and from sin set free,
His blood has made me whole.

"Whosoever," surely meaneth me, surely meaneth me,
O surely meaneth me; "Whosoever" surely meaneth me,

“Whosoever” meaneth me!

III. The Ties To God's Love

How do you get tied to God's love? Two words are key:

Believe and Receive.

-It is so simple: Believe and you will receive.

-If you and I had to work for our salvation or earn our salvation, many of us would never have eternal life. We could not meet the requirements.

-“Whosoever” can believe. Anyone can believe: Adults and children alike; smart folks and slow folks alike; rich folks and poor folks alike; likable folks and folks who are hard to get along with.

-If you believe with your heart that Jesus died for your sin and that he was buried and that He rose again on the third day and confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord of your life, you shall be saved.

-That is the only way you will ever be tied to His redeeming love.

If you are unwilling to be tied to God's love, you will experience something eternally unpleasant. Jesus said that you would Perish.

-The word perish doesn't mean annihilation, but to be given over to a final ruin and misery and destiny in hell.

-The most horrible thing that can happen to anyone is for them to live their entire life without a relationship with the Lord and then to die and go to Hell! John 8:24

Nothing in this world or eternity beyond can compare with dying in your sins without Jesus Christ! Why?

-Because of what the Bible says to those who die without Him – 2 Thess. 1:8-9

-There is no thought more horrible than the thought of going to Hell, forever, with no hope of release or redemption.

-The truth of the matter is this: If you go to Hell, you will go because you did not trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

-It will not be God's fault. You will have no one to blame but yourself. There will be no one to point your finger at to blame. The blame will rest squarely on your shoulders

-If you leave this world without Jesus, one day you will stand before God and be judged for your sins – Rev. 20:11-15

IV. The Prize of God's Love

We are not meant to live here forever. Those who are saved will enjoy “everlasting life.”

-They can never die! Because they know Jesus, they know the Prince of Life and they are alive forever more.

V. The Cries of God's Love

Nothing causes deeper hurt or pain than rejected love – in marriage, a family or toward God.

How it breaks God's heart when we reject His Son and His offer of love. When we reject God's love, we reject His only hope of salvation.

In 1929, after the crash of the stock market, John Griffith took his wife and his baby boy and a few meager belongings in an old car and took a job caring for one of those great, huge bridges that crossed the mighty Mississippi. After being on the job for a while, he brought his 8 year old son, Greg, to work with him for the first time to see what Daddy did all day long. The little boy was wide-eyed with excitement, and he clapped his hands with glee when the huge bridge went up at the beck and call of his mighty father. He watched with wonderment as the huge boats steamed down the Mississippi.

Twelve o'clock came, and his father put up the bridge. There were no trains due for a good while, and they went out a couple of hundred feet on a catwalk out over the river to an observation deck. They sat down, opened their brown bag, and began to eat their lunch. His father told him about some of the strange, faraway lands that some of these ships were going to visit. This entranced the boy.

The time whirled by, and suddenly they were drawn instantly back to reality by the shrieking of a distant train whistle. John Griffith quickly looked at his watch. He saw that it was time for the 1:07, the Memphis Express, with 400 passengers, which would be rushing across that bridge in just a couple of minutes. He knew he had just enough time, so without panic but with alacrity he told his son to stay where he was.

He leaped to his feet, jumped to the catwalk, ran back, climbed the ladder to the control room, went in, put his hand on the huge lever that controlled the bridge, looked up the river and down to see if any boats were coming, as was his custom, and then looked down to see if there were any beneath the bridge.

And suddenly he saw a sight that froze his blood and caused his heart to leap into his throat. His boy! His boy had tried to follow him to the control room and had fallen into the great huge gear box that had the monstrous gears that operated this massive bridge. His left leg was caught between the two main gears, and the father knew that as sure as the sun came up in the morning, if he pushed that lever his son would be ground in the midst of eight tons of whining, grinding steel.

His eyes filled with tears of panic. His mind whirled. What could he do? He saw a rope there in the control room. He could rush

down the ladder and out the catwalk, tie off the rope, lower himself down, extricate his son, climb back up the rope, run back into the control room, and lower the bridge. No sooner had his mind done that exercise than he knew –he knew there wasn't time. He'd never make it, and there were 400 people on that train.

Suddenly he heard the whistle again, this time startlingly closer. And he could hear the clicking of the locomotive wheels on the track, and he could hear the rapid puffing of the train. What could he do? What could he do? There were 400 people, but this was ...this was his son, this was his only son. He was a father! He knew what he had to do, so he buried his head in his arm and he pushed the gear forward.

The great bridge slowly lowered into place just as the express train roared across. He lifted up his tear-smudged face and looked straight into the flashing windows of that train as they flashed by one after another. He saw men reading the afternoon paper, a conductor in uniform looking at a large vest-pocket watch, ladies sipping tea out of teacups, and little children pushing long spoons into plates of ice cream. Nobody, nobody looked down to the great gear box.

In heart-wrenching agony, he beat against the window of the control room, and he said, "What's wrong with you people? Don't you care? I sacrificed my son for you. Don't any of you care?" Nobody looked. Nobody heard. Nobody heeded. The train disappeared across the river. Sometimes I wonder if the Lord is asking the same questions as these.

Make Your Choice

John 3:16-21

Remember that Jesus is still talking to Nicodemus about being born again.

1. Jesus begins by telling Nicodemus that he has a great need in his life. He needs to be born again.

-He needs a second birth. He has been born physically, but he has never been born spiritually, and he needs to be.

-As religious as Nicodemus was, he knew something was missing in his life. Jesus told him that what was missing was spiritual life.

-That's what is missing in the lost man's life today, and until he receives spiritual life from God, he will not be able to see or understand spiritual things from God.

-Not only will he not be able to understand spiritual things until he is born again, he will not be able to enter into the Kingdom of God.

2. Then Jesus tells him that the New Birth is a must. He cannot go to heaven without personally being born again.

3. Then Jesus tells him how to be born again.

-The wind of the Holy Spirit awakens him to his need and then points him to the only One who can give him eternal life.

-Jesus reminds him of an O.T. Event. The people of Israel were dying of snake bites. God's instructions were to put a brazen snake, one that looked like the deadly snake, on a pole, and all who looked, believing in faith that God would reward the faith in looking, would live. It was through their believing; their faith, that would bring them healing. Believe and receive.

4. Now Jesus gives Nicodemus a new concept. The Jews believed that when the Messiah came, He would come in judgment and in condemnation.

-Jesus corrects his thinking. Jesus tells him that when the Messiah came, He would come in Love and Light. That's how He would come into the world the first time. When He came the second time, He would come to judge.

-John 12:47; Luke 19:10; I Tim. 1:15; John 3:17; I John 4:14

Notice John 5:26-27 Now notice the word "also"

-One of our Lord's responsibilities WILL BE to judge the world ONE DAY – note John 5:22

-What our verse means is that judgment was not Jesus' priority the FIRST time He came. Salvation was His priority. Though He will one day judge the earth, the priority of His first coming was not to be the judge, but to save.

-God's heart is that people would be saved – 2 Peter 3:9; I Tim. 2:3-4

(The word "desire" speaks of God's will, His wish, what He finds pleasure in and loves).

When you look at John 3:16-21, God is saying that every man must – must – make a choice. We are presented with two alternatives. They are the same two alternatives that the very first man and woman (Adam and Eve) were faced with. They are the same alternative that the last person born on this earth will be faced with. You must choose:

- . Life or Death . Condemnation or Justification
- . Light or Darkness . Acceptance or Rejection

Make the choice: What will you do with Jesus?

Choose light and you will not be condemned; If you don't choose light, you are condemned already.

Notice again John 3:18-21

The man who comes to the Light is Not condemned and will never be condemned.

-The believer is saved. He is as guilty as the unbeliever, but there is one critical difference: the believer believes on Jesus Christ and has committed his life to Him.

-The believer is actively and diligently seeking Christ. He is released from condemnation because he believes on Christ.

-John 5:24; Rom. 8:1

The saved person Loves the Light, but the lost person Loathes the Light.

-The saved person loves the light because the saved person wants to do better and to be better than he is. He wants to be like the light, the Lord Jesus.

-Jesus said, "I AM the Light of the world" and then He said, "you are the light of the world".

Have you ever thought about it? Sometimes it's great to feel bad when you come to church? The light shows you that you need to make some corrections or some things that will cause you to develop more into the likeness of Christ.

-People who really want to change for the better are not afraid of a little light. Instead, they welcome it. Light uncovers hidden things, things that need to change.

EVEN though the saved person is not condemned, there is a sort of condemnation or judgment that should continually take place as the redeemed responds to the light.

-Let's say that here is a young man who is going out on a big date. He wants to look his best for his date. But he gets in from work late and has just enough time to get ready for his big date. He walks into the bathroom, turns the light on, and stands in front of the mirror. What does he see in the mirror? Maybe he sees something that he needs to "fix". His hair is a mess. His clothes are wrinkled. His breath is a little offensive. What is he going to do with what he sees in the mirror? His judgment of himself determines what he wants to make better.

That expression that Jesus uses, "is not condemned," means that the saved person is pardoned, acquitted, justified, cleared from all guilt, delivered from the curse of a broken law, no longer counted a sinner, but reckoned perfectly righteous in the sight of God, and shall not be condemned in the last day.

But what about the one who does not believe on Jesus? He is condemned already. What does that mean?

1. It means that the unbeliever's future judgment is as sure as if it has already happened if he doesn't get saved.

2. The unbeliever is already under the present curse of sin. He is without Christ, an alien from the people of God, a stranger to the promises of God, and without hope.

3. The unbeliever already stands guilty of all the sins he has ever committed.

He is guilty first and foremost because he has not believed on God's Divine Son who was given as the great remedy for man's sin.

He is condemned because he loves darkness. He loves his sin and does not want to turn and face the conviction of the Light. He feels uncomfortable and hates the Light.

A mouse was caught in a mouse trap, but he was caught by his back leg. He was caught and dying, but they found him still nibbling on the cheese. That is just like sinful man. He knows the drugs, the drink, the immorality is killing him, but he continues in his sin.

Some have become so hardened in their sin that they prefer the dark ways and eternal death.

-When the Bastille, a castle-like prison in Paris, was about to be destroyed in 1789, a convict was brought out who had been confined in one of its gloomy cells for many years. But instead of joyfully welcoming his liberty, he begged to be taken back. It had been such a long time since he had seen the sunshine that his eyes could not endure its brightness. His only desire was to die in the murky dungeon where he had been a captive.

God loves you so much that He gave His Son so you would not have to live under condemnation and His wrath.

-Someone misquoted John 3:16 but got it right when they said, ...should not perish but have Internal Life.

In 1929, after the crash of the stock market, John Griffith took his wife and his baby boy and a few meager belongings in an old car and took a job caring for one of those great, huge bridges that crossed the mighty Mississippi. After being on the job for a while, he brought his 8-year-old son, Greg, to work with him for the first time to see what Daddy did all day long. The little boy was wide-eyed with excitement, and he clapped his hands with glee when the huge bridge went up at the beck and call of his mighty father. He watched with wonderment as the huge boats steamed down the Mississippi.

Twelve o'clock came, and his father put up the bridge. There were no trains due for a good while, and they went out a couple of hundred feet on a catwalk out over the river to an observation deck. They sat down, opened their brown bag, and began to eat their lunch. His father told him about some of the strange, faraway lands that some of these ships were going to visit. This entranced the boy.

The time whirled by, and suddenly they were drawn instantly back to reality by the shrieking of a distant train whistle. John Griffith

quickly looked at his watch. He saw that it was time for the 1:07, the Memphis Express, with 400 passengers, which would be rushing across that bridge in just a couple of minutes. He knew he had just enough time, so without panic but with alacrity he told his son to stay where he was.

He leaped to his feet, jumped to the catwalk, ran back, climbed the ladder to the control room, went in, put his hand on the huge lever that controlled the bridge, looked up the river and down to see if any boats were coming, as was his custom, and then looked down to see if there were any beneath the bridge. And suddenly he saw a sight that froze his blood and

caused his heart to leap into his throat. His boy! His boy had tried to follow him to the control room and had fallen into the great huge gear box that had the monstrous gears that operated this massive bridge.

His left leg was caught between the two main gears, and the father knew that as sure as the sun came up in the morning, if he pushed that lever his son would be ground in the midst of eight tons of whining, grinding steel.

His eyes filled with tears of panic. His mind whirled. What could he do? He saw a rope there in the control room. He could rush down the ladder and out the catwalk, tie off the rope, lower himself down, extricate his son, climb back up the rope, run back into the control room, and lower the bridge. No sooner had his mind done that exercise than he knew –he knew there wasn't time. He'd never make it, and there were 400 people on that train.

Suddenly he heard the whistle again, this time startlingly closer. And he could hear the clicking of the locomotive wheels on the track, and he could hear the rapid puffing of the train. What could he do? What could he do? There were 400 people, but this was ...this was his son, this was his only son. He was a father! He knew what he had to do, so he buried his head in his arm and he pushed the gear forward.

The great bridge slowly lowered into place just as the express train roared across. He lifted up his tear-smeared face and looked straight into the flashing windows of that train as they flashed by one after another. He saw men reading the afternoon paper, a conductor in uniform looking at a large vest-pocket watch, ladies sipping tea out of teacups, and little children pushing long spoons into plates of ice cream. Nobody, nobody looked down to the great gear box.

In heart-wrenching agony, he beat against the window of the control room, and he said, "What's wrong with you people? Don't you care? I sacrificed my son for you. Don't any of you care?" Nobody looked. Nobody heard. Nobody heeded. The train disappeared across the river. Sometimes I wonder if the Lord is asking the same questions as these.

The Preacher Who Lost His Congregation

John 3:22-36

Before Reading the Passage:

Let me give you a quote from Jesus and let's see if you know whom He is speaking of: "Truly, I say to you, among those born of woman there has not arisen anyone greater than _____."

John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11)

Now, if you had not already known that, would John the Baptist have been your first choice?

+What about Moses...or David...or Noah...or Isaiah.

+John the Baptist really doesn't seem to fit the mold.

- . Most churches wouldn't call him as pastor.
- . He wore funny looking clothes – camel hair and a leather belt; he was hardly dressed for success.
- . He had a strange diet – locusts (bugs) and honey.
- . He was a straight shooter – he called the important religious leaders snakes.
- . He lived out in the wilderness, all alone.

Why would Jesus say such a thing about John the Baptist? I think it was because John did his job better than anyone else could have done it...and he did it with delight.

Read the Passage

There are two scenes in John 3:

(1) John 3:1-21 – The focus is on Nicodemus

(2) In John 3:22-36 The focus was on John the Baptist

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus, a job that had three primary functions:

- To clear the way – to remove obstacles from the minds and hearts of others so they would be ready for the messiah.
- To Prepare the way – to promote repentance on the part of the nation so He would be accepted.
- And to get out of the way – To step aside once the Messiah had been introduced...this was the toughest part of his job description... That's why Jesus called him a great man.

Now Jesus does, from a human perspective, what seems to be a strange thing...He moves from the city where there are many people, and moves to the rural area...to the very domain of John the Baptist.

• In fact, He is only about 20 miles from where John is and stays there about eight months.

• Why would Jesus do that? Two reasons:

1. Because there is much water there – John 3:23 This is not the last time there was a dispute over baptism.

I could spend a lot of time as a Baptist talking about the much water and the right mode of baptism – but I won't.

2. He remained there – 8 months – with His disciples John 3:22b

He was with them, pouring His life into them.

D.L. Moody said, "I had rather train ten men to do the job than to do the job of ten men."

I. John's Hearers 3:25-26

-“Rabbi, your star is becoming dim. Your ministry is diminishing. What are we going to do?”

-“Hey Preacher, you gotta do something! Attendance is way down, and we're losing a lot of members to that new church down the street.”

- Sound familiar? John's disciples were feeling the crunch of competition.
- The implication was that they were not going to allow John to take a back seat to anyone else.
- John rebuked them for thinking and saying such a thing.

-Look at the spirit of John's disciples:

1. Notice their sarcasm – John 3:25-26 - They wouldn't even use Jesus' name. “He that was with you...to whom you barest witness to.”

2. Notice the exaggeration – John 3:26 – All are going to Him...There was resentment over His success.

-There is regrettable competition among Christians.

-This is not the first time it's happened – Num. 11:26-29; 12:3

II. John's Humility

-John had a proper sense of the sovereignty of God John 3:27

● John was saying that if Jesus was attracting and winning more people than he was, it was because God was giving them to Him to be his followers.

● If we understand the sovereignty of God in the matter of leadership, it will keep us from being proud of our own imagined spiritual insight and success and it will keep us from being jealous over another's apparent success.

● I Cor. 4:7 Living Bible

-John knew who he was and to what God had called him

-“I told you up front that I wasn't the Christ...just a voice...forerunner.”

-“I said, “I'm not worthy to loosen the strap on His shoes and wash His feet; Even to do that lowly task for Christ.”

-“I'm the friend of the bridegroom – The friend doesn't get the bride, the groom does...but I'm grateful for the part I played. The friend is

like our best man...but he places the hand of the bride into the hand of the groom which signals their oneness. Maybe today it would be more like the father of the bride who says, "Her mother and I give our daughter to be the groom's bride."

-John 3:31-36

III. John's Heart 3:30

What does that mean?

A little boy and his dad were walking by a skyscraper construction site. He looked up on one of the tall buildings and said, "Daddy, what are those little boys doing on top of that building?" The dad said, "They are not little boys. They just look small because they are so high up."

The little boy said, "Well, I bet by the time they get to heaven, you won't be able to see them at all."

-When we catch the spirit of John 3:30 we always get the blessing. F.B. Meyer ministered in London and was at the height of his ministry when a 19-year-old began pastoring in the same town. Folks began to flock to hear the young man. Before long, the young man was filling up the 5,000 seat building and at age 20 they built him a 6,000 seat building. The young man's name was Spurgeon. Meyer said at first, he was jealous when he saw all the carriages pass his church to go hear Spurgeon. Meyer said he determined to pray for Spurgeon and his success. When he did, two things happened:

1. He felt like Spurgeon's success was also his; 2. He began getting the overflow from Spurgeon's church and his was filled again.

John ends with an alter call that would jolt anyone trying to straddle the fence – John 3:36

-This verse is the conclusion of John the Baptist's testimony to Christ, and it has to do with the importance of believing on Christ.

He tells them and us life or death, heaven or hell all depends on whether or not we receive Christ.

-Like his master, John teaches that "believing on the Son" is the way to heaven, and not believing is the way to hell.

Note the "Presentness" of the Salvation that is in Christ John teaches, just as his Master did, that a believer "hath" everlasting life, peace and pardon, the very moment that he lays his sins on Jesus and puts his trust in Him.

Some condemn preachers of the gospel for speaking on God's wrath or even mentioning hell. Yet, the last words of our Lord's forerunner declared the danger of unbelief. The last words of John the Baptist was to warn men of God's wrath.

Notice how John the Baptist exalts Jesus. He calls Him:

- The Christ – John 3:28
- The bridegroom – John 3:29
- He comes from heaven and is above all – John 3:31
- He testifies of all He has seen and heard from Heaven – John 3:32
- He was sent from God – John 3:34
- God has given Him His spirit without measure – John 3:34
- The Father loves the Son – John 3:35
- The Father has given all things into His hands – John 3:35
- He who believes in the Son has everlasting life – John 3:36

The Bad Samaritan

John 4:1-30

In John 20, John gives us his purpose for writing His Gospel. He writes it so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through His name.

-In doing so, he shows us a number of people in a variety of situations who came to trust Jesus as their personal Savior.

● In John 3 he tells us of a MAN named Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night; in John 4, he tells us of an unnamed WOMAN who met Jesus at the hottest part of the day, at noon.

● In John 3, he tells us of a morally, but lost, religious man who was respected by all; in John 4, he tells us of a moral outcast who was looked down on, especially by all the women of her town.

The first three verses of John 4 tell us that Jesus and His disciples are leaving Judea and going to Galilee.

-Jesus left because of a rumor that was causing conflict between the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus. John's disciples thought Jesus was trying to up-stage John because folks were leaving John's ministry and were now following Jesus. Of course, John the Baptist didn't feel that way. In fact, John said, "He must increase and I must decrease," but to put an end to the conflict, Jesus went to another place to minister.

Notice John 4:4 "And He (Jesus) MUST NEEDS go through Samaria." Why? Why MUST Jesus go through Samaria? Because Jesus

was following a Divine plan given by His Father and He was also following a Divine Time-table.

Jesus lived with a Divine Must:

- Luke 2:49 "I must be about my Father's business"
- Luke 4:43 "I must preach the Kingdom of God"
- Luke 9:22 "The Son of Man must suffer many things"
- John 9:4 "I must work the works of Him that sent me."
- John 3:14 "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

-Now, Jesus "must needs go through Samaria."

Why? Because Jesus had a Divine Appointment with a Samaritan woman.

Let me say a word about Samaritans. In Luke 10, we can read about one we call the Good Samaritan, but here in John 4, we find a bad Samaritan.

Why did the Jews hate the Samaritans so? For the Jews, they felt like if they walked across Samaritan land, they would be defiled. No Jew would drink after a Samaritan or they would be defiled. Why such hatred?

-When our Lord's enemies wanted to insult Him, they called Him a demon possessed Samaritan – John 8:48. Why did the Jews hate the Samaritans so?

In 722 BC, the Assyrians captured the ten Northern tribes. They carried the Jews that were the cream of the crop with them.

They left the poor, the disabled, the inferior, those they counted as worthless in the land, but they brought some Assyrians to rule over them. God's law said that there was to never be inter-marriage between Jew and Gentile, but they were to keep the Jewish race pure. But the Jews who were left behind did inter-marry with the Assyrians and they were hated for it. They were called half-breeds and were outcast. They were looked upon as traitors. The Jews wanted nothing to do with them.

With that in mind, I want you to see this Samaritan woman's:

I. Encounter – John 4:5-9

Instead of going around Samaria, like most Jews did, Jesus led his disciples right through the heart of Samaria. He and His disciples had walked from early morning from Judea and it was now noon (about the sixth hour) when they arrived at Jacob's well, a trip of about 20 miles.

-Jesus was tired from His journey so He sat upon the lip of the well and instructed His disciples to go into town to buy some food and He would wait for them there.

-I know this almost sounds like a joke, but how many disciples does it take to buy groceries? The answer, of course, would be only two or three disciples would have been plenty to buy food for thirteen people. But Jesus had sent them all away.

-Perhaps that was an act of mercy; because such a sinful Samaritan woman would have been too embarrassed to come out to draw water from a well with 10 or 12 Jewish men surrounding the well if Jesus brought up her past.

-In love and mercy, Jesus sent the others away; making sure that nothing stood in the way of this very important meeting at the well.

The Lord Jesus is the Master personal soul-winner. Watch Him as He wins this Samaritan outcast to Himself. He is our INSTRUCTIVE Model and He can teach us how we can lead others to Him.

Most women came to the well to draw water either early morning or late evening when it was cooler. But this not so nice woman came in the heat of the day. Better the scorching heat than the sharp remarks about her from the wagging tongues of the "nice" women. This nameless woman has an appointment with Divine destiny.

I can see Jesus sitting on the well curb. He looks up and sees this woman coming toward Him.

-She is not young, but she is not old either. There are unmistakable traces of beauty of both face and form. There is something else that is unmistakable. There is a look of sadness, of disappointment, of discontent. What was in her heart was revealed in her countenance.

-Her heart is filled with emptiness. Her shameful past has brought dissatisfaction. She hates herself for what she has become.

-When she was young, she never dreamed she would have made such a mess out of her life. She took one wrong step after another until she became what she is now.

-She tried to act as if she didn't care, but she did. She didn't want to be a social outcast. She longed to be different, but she has lost hope of being any better.

-She has been married and divorced five times and she is at a dead end right now, living with a man in a relationship that leads nowhere. But, for now, she needs him. His presence fills the lonely night with a measure of companionship, however shallow.

She sees a stranger sitting on the well curb. She can tell by His dress that He is a Jew. She's glad that it's a man and that He's a Jew.

It's unlawful for a Jew to talk to a woman in public and Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans. She's safe! He won't talk to her.

-But He did! He asked her for a drink of water!

Look at our Lord's tactful approach to this woman. Jesus took the initiative in relating to her; and started the ball rolling. And what's interesting is that He started it all off by presenting His own need to her. He opened the door by asking her to do something for him and serve Him.

-I think she saw the kindness and the unexpected respect for her that she had not seen from other men. He seemed to value her as a person.

-I think His request took the woman completely by surprise. It was such an unusual thing that, as she drew the water from the well, dipped a cup into the bucket, and handed it over to Him, she had to ask, "How is it that you ask me for a drink?"

-Jesus is breaking down the barriers of race, gender, and soon, religion.

Jesus didn't answer her question, but He raises her curiosity without making her suspicious – note John 4:10

-“You came here for water. I've got water that will so satisfy you that you'll never have to draw water again.” He is leading her step by step to saving faith.

Jesus said, “Oh, if you just knew! If you just knew! If you just knew! If you just knew what I could do For you and In you and Through you – I could Fill you with LIVING WATER!

-He has said just enough to make her want to know more! I can see Jesus taking a sip of water just as He says those words; sitting and waiting for those words to sink in.

-Notice John 4:10-15 Notice John 4:10 “If you would ask me, I would have given you living water.” Oh, the simplicity of salvation. Salvation is asking God to save you and receiving salvation in return. Think about that! Salvation and Heaven is yours for the asking? Just ask Jesus with a humble, repentant heart, and salvation is yours for the asking!

II. Exposure – John 4:15-29

Is Jesus being insensitive? Why bring up anything about her past? Is He trying to embarrass her? The answer is no.

-But His instruction to call her husband made her very uncomfortable. She doesn't go into detail, she simply says, “I have no husband.”

-That was the truth, but it wasn't the whole truth. She knows it, but what she doesn't know is that Jesus knows it, too.

The words of Jesus are a verbal slap in the face, and yet, it was the most loving thing He could have done for her.

-There is an important spiritual principle at work here. Without conviction of sin, there can be no conversion.

-God sees behind the mask to the reality within. Until we come to grips with our sin and our willful disobedience to God, we cannot be saved.

-This woman could not hide anything from God; nor can we. Hebrews 4:13

In John 4:26, Jesus admitted for the first time that He was the Messiah.

-Between John 4:26 and 28, this woman Faced her sin, Forsook her sin and Followed the Savior.

-She asked for living water and Jesus gave it to her. She drew with the bucket of faith and a well of joy sprang up in her.

Notice how her heart changed toward the Lord. She begins by calling Him a “Jew” (John 4:9), then “sir” (John 4:11), then a “prophet” (John 4:19), then “the Christ, the Savior” (John 4:42).

What a transformation that took place in her life!

Song: It is no secret what God can do
 What He's done for others, He'll do for you.
 With arms wide open, He'll pardon you.
 It is no secret what God can do.

Song: “Like the woman at the well, I was seeking,
 For things that cannot satisfy.
 And then I heard the Savior saying
 Draw from My well that never shall run dry.”

 Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up Lord,
 Come and quench this thirsting of my soul,
 Bread of Heaven, feed me till I want no more,
 Fill my cup, fill it up, and make me whole.”

Song: Only Jesus can satisfy your soul; and only He can
 Change your heart and make you whole
 He'll give you peace you never new; sweet love and
 Joy and heaven too.

For only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

III. Evangelism John 4:28-30; 39-42

- She has experienced something that is too good to keep to herself. She had to tell someone.
- There is power in a personal testimony. Her eternity rested on that solo experience with Jesus. She knew if Jesus could save her, He could save anyone.
- She had wasted the best years of her life, but now she would share the best part of her life. She would testify of what Jesus had done for her, and folks believed.
- Has anyone ever believed because of your testimony – your witness?
- Somebody needs to hear you share what Christ has done in your life.

Are you thirsty? Is there a well of water within you?

Those who die without Christ will thirst forever – Luke 16:19ff

The invitation Jesus gave this woman to receive living water, He gives to you now.

It's Harvest Time

John 4:31-42

The Gospel of John is a soul-winning book.

-Oh, John writes to tell us that Jesus is deity; that He is the Son of God in the flesh – the Christ and the Promised Messiah – but he writes that we “might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through His name.”

Jesus said, “I am come to seek and to save that which is lost.”

-The work of God is to reach lost people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to win them for Christ through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus.

Have you ever wondered why the lord doesn't take us to glory the moment we are saved? One reason is so that we can share with others what Christ has done in our hearts since He saved us.

Let me share with you the two most embarrassing questions you can ask a Christian. Do you know what they are?

(1) When was the last time you lead a soul to Christ?

(2) When was the last time you tried?

Someone has said that the greatest sin we have in our church is silence.

-The greatest work of the church is the work for the souls of men.

The Bible gives us at least two examples of what soul-winning is like:

(1) It is like Farming

Matthew, Luke, and John all tell us that the harvest is plentiful and ready, but the laborers are few.

-Farming is hard work. The farmer must clear the field, plow the ground, sow the seed, weed the field – And wait, and wait.

-You can't rush the harvest, but when the harvest is ready, you can no longer wait. You must drop everything and reap the harvest; if you don't the harvest will rot or spoil. You will have missed an opportunity and you may never get to reap it. It's lost!

(2) It's like Fishing

Jesus said that he would make us fishers of men.

_To catch fish, you have to go to where the fish are. You don't catch fish inside of a building. To catch fish or men you have to Go after them.

_Then you have to use the right bait.

-Someone said that the church is no longer fishing for men, we are now keepers of the Aquarium!

Four things I want to share with you as we consider Harvest Time and the harvesting of the souls of men:

I. A Surprising Opportunity

Jesus said two things about the harvest: It is plentiful and it is ready. That's an encouraging truth.

-Harvest time is what it is all about. Harvest time is the goal of the whole season. It's what you work for.

-What brings the greatest joy? Clearing the land? Plowing the land? Planting the seed? Waiting for the plants to break through the soil? No! Reaping! Harvesting!

The question is not, "Is there an opportunity?" but, "will we seize the opportunity?"

-Billy Graham said that the evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men is always being decided. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear the full responsibility for the next one, but God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and how we take advantage of our opportunities. We must be faithful soul-winners, for if we are not, we are only one generation from paganism.

-I heard about a sales manager who called his salesmen together to try to encourage them to have a greater vision for their company. He had a big white poster board set up in the conference room, and in the middle to that poster board he had drawn a black circle about the size of a quarter. He asked each one of his salesmen to come and to tell him what they saw on that poster.

Well, the first one said, "I see a black dot." The second one said, "I see a black dot." The third one said, "I see a black dot." All thirty-five sales people in that room said the same thing, "I see a black dot."

The sales manager looked at them for a moment and then said, "Isn't it strange that all of you saw the black dot, but none of you saw the white all around it."

We must lift up our eyes and see that the fields are indeed white unto harvest. I heard about a man who went to Africa as a shoe salesman. He had been there only a few days and wrote back to his employer and said, "Bring me home. You've made a horrible mistake. The people over here don't wear shoes." So, they brought him home. Not long after that a man come and applied for a job at that same company. He was told, "The only place we have to send you is Africa." He said, "I'll go." They sent him over to the same place where the other salesman had been. After a few days he wrote back and said, "Send me all the shoes you can get. I've never seen so many prospects."

-It all depends on how you see things.

II. The Satanic Opposition

Why don't we try to win folks to the Lord more than we do? I think the greatest opposition to soul-winning is our lack of passion for lost souls.

-Psalm 126:5-6 We are to sow continuously and consistently.

-One of the great sins in the church is the sin of silence.

D.L.Moody was talking to an atheist. The atheist told Moody, "You know I don't believe in God. You say you and other Christians do. You know I don't believe in heaven and hell. You say you and other Christians do. I don't think Christians really believe in hell. If I believed in the kind of hell you say you believe in, I would crawl on my hands and knees, if necessary, over broken, burning glass to reach one soul and try to keep him from going there."

We need to ask the Lord to increase our passion for the lost.

Set my soul afire, Lord, for the lost in sin, Give to me a passion as I seek to win; Help me not to falter, never let me fail, fill me with Thy Spirit, let Thy will prevail.

Set my soul afire, Lord, set my soul afire, make my life a witness of Thy saving power. Millions grope in darkness, waiting for Thy word, set my soul afire, Lord set my soul afire.

III. A Somber Observation

"The laborers are few" why is that? Field-work - Soul-winning- is not glamorous work. It is often lonely, hard, exhausting, slow work. It requires that we rearrange our priorities.

IV. A Solemn Obligation – John 4:35-38

In John 4:35, Jesus says that when you plant wheat or corn, it takes about four months until the fruit is ready to harvest. But when you harvest men, there are always some who are ready to be harvested. Some are ready to be harvested earlier than others.

-This woman had received Christ, had gone back to her hometown and told the men there what had happened in her life and that she believed that Jesus was the Messiah that was to come. Then she invited them to come and see Jesus for themselves. They had seen the change in her life; now she tells them that Jesus can change their life, too.

When Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest," many Bible students believe that Jesus looked up to see the woman and, following her, many Samaritan men. Samaritan men often wore white robes with white head pieces. The scene looked like a field of ripened grain coming toward them.

Another thing that Jesus says is that there will be a common joy in heaven among all who have labored for Christ when the whole

harvest of saved souls is finally gathered in.

-A day will come when all who have labored for Christ in any way, either by sowing or reaping, will sit down and rejoice together for all eternity.

-Here in this world the sower sometimes does not live to see the fruit of his labor, and the reaper who gathers in the harvest rejoices alone. But work done in the spiritual harvest is eternal work and both sowers and reapers are sure to “rejoice together” and to see the fruit of their labor.

-In Heaven there will be no jealousy and envy among Christ's laborers. Some have been sowers and some have been reapers, but all will have done their part and will finally rejoice together.

-In doing the work for Christ, there are sowers as well as reapers. The work of the reaper makes far more show than the work of the sower; yet, it is clear that if there was no sowing, there would be no reaping – it is important that we remember this.

-The church often gives an excessive honor to Christ's reapers, and to overlook the labors of Christ's sowers.

Notice John 4:36 – we are not to do what we do for Christ for wages or reward. We are to do what we do because we love the Lord Jesus.

But when we do what we do out of love for Jesus, He rewards us and God pays top wages.

May I ask you a question that Charles Hadden Spurgeon asked: “If someone offered you a thousand dollars for every soul you reach for Christ, would you make more of an effort than you do now when the reward is an eternal crown?”

-John 4:37-38 Says two things: (1) No witness is ever wasted; (2) No worker is ever worthless

John 4:37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

John 4:38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.

How do we become a part of the sowers or the reapers? Jesus sums it up in one word: Pray! The church is to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest fields.

-If we really pray for God to send workers into His field, we - those who pray – will catch the burden to be the ones who go into God's fields.

Jesus said we are to ask the Lord of the harvest to “send forth” workers.

-The Greek word conveys a very powerful image. The word means “to throw out.” We get our English word “ballistic” from it, which refers to the explosion that occurs when the hammer of a pistol hits a bullet, propelling it out of the gun. We are to pray that God will light a fire inside the church that will ignite a movement inside many hearts that will result in people being “thrust out “of the church into the harvest fields of the world. We need to pray that God will throw some people out of the church.

6

An Expose' of Legalism

John 5:8-18

Before Reading the passage:

The miracles in the gospel of John are called “signs” or “sign miracles.” Of all the miracles that Jesus performed, John choose seven that demonstrated that Jesus was the Messiah...God come in the flesh and that by believing in Him one could have eternal life.

-Several of the sign-miracles in John are a platform for one of our Lord's discourses.

. In John 6, Jesus fed the 5,000... after that He gave His discourse about Him being the Bread of Heaven.

. Here in John 5, Jesus heals a man who had been cripple for 38 years, followed by a discourse on legalism, using the Sabbath day as proof of their legalism.

Let me retell the miracle: At the pool of Bethesda, which means house of Mercy, was a large gathering of sick folks. They were at the pool because they believed an angel would trouble the water and the first person in the water would be healed. Jesus saw this man who had been sick for 38 years and asked him a strange question: “Do you want to be made whole?” Then Jesus said, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” The man did; he was healed, and Jesus left. But shortly after that the Pharisees condemned the man and Jesus, for it was done on the Sabbath Day.

Read the Passage

Everywhere you go today, Jesus Christ is on trial in the hearts and minds of people.

- You and I can't be neutral about Jesus. Jesus said that either we are for Him or against Him. We cannot be neutral.
- He is on trial by some here today in your hearts.

This miracle in John 5 has two focus points: one is the miracle itself, and the other is legalism.

In this study I want us to see an expose' of legalism; to expose the danger of legalism.

I. The Meaning of Legalism

-Legalist measure spiritual growth against a yardstick of rules – Not from the Bible, but their own personal list of do's and don'ts.

- They use these lists to size people up as to their spirituality.
- The Pharisees are the grandfathers of legalism.

Let me ask and answer three questions about legalism:

A. What is legalism?

- Legalism is conforming to a code of behavior for the purpose of exalting self.
- Legalist make list of do's and don'ts not based on scripture, but on tradition or personal preference; then they judge themselves and others on their performance. In a nutshell, it's "checklist Christianity."

- When we lift the veil on legalism, we find hypocrisy instead of holiness, for its purpose is to exalt self.
- Some of the most vicious people in the family of God are legalist.

B. How does legalism happen?

- Gal. 2:4 says false brethren slip in to spy out our liberty in Christ and bring us into bondage.
- The legalist thinks when you talk about liberty in Christ, you are condoning loose living or giving someone a license to sin.

C. Why is legalism wrong?

- First and foremost, legalism is unbiblical. Grace and freedom are the hallmarks of the Christian life, not law and bondage.
- John 8:32 "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."
- Rom. 8:1-4

Rom 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Rom 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

- Gal. 5:1

Gal 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

- Second, it promotes the flesh Rom. 8:8

Rom 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

- The major differences between living under law and living under grace lies in the motivation to obey the commandments of God.
- The Israelites received the Mosaic Law and its more than 600 commands. They were motivated to obey by FEAR and empowered only by the FLESH. Today believers in Christ receive grace and although the N.T. Contains hundreds of commands, we are motivated by LOVE and empowered by the HOLY SPIRIT.

- What motivates your obedience to Christ – law and fear, or the grace and love now offered to us?

D. Legalism is Based on Pride

- "I" and "self-righteousness" are the pillars that support legalism.
- One mark that exposes a legalist is criticism.
- His closest friend is a mirror! He likes himself! His standards are right and if you don't live up to his standards and list, he will speak down to you and make you feel guilty because you do not live up to his standards.
- I told you they were the most vicious folks in the church, but they are also the most obnoxious.

-Tell of man at KFC who had tag on van, "I Am Saved" ...he was loud, overbearing, wanted everyone to know how spiritual he was.

-Rob Pelkey at BMC...would witness to you at a drop of a hat- or if you didn't drop a hat. I don't know of anyone he won to the Lord. I know a lot that he ran off and he couldn't keep a church. He presented himself as the standard to measure yourself by.

II. The Menace of Legalism John 5:8-18

-Here was a man who was healed after being sick for 38 years. You would think they would rejoice. But they said, "Put up your bed. Get

back down on your back. This is the Sabbath.”

-Here's one difference between the Sabbath and Sunday. The Sabbath was given under Law; Sunday was given under grace.

-God gave the Sabbath as a sign to the Jews – never to the Gentiles.

- Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17

- Sabbath ended – Col. 2:14-17 (Note: Shadow – I have a picture of my wife, but I don't look at it when I'm with her because she is the real thing. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Sabbath)

- The Jews were not satisfied with just the Law of the Sabbath. They added 39 rules to the law that was intended to be a ban on commerce and trade for the Jews (Jer. 17:21-22, 27; Neh. 9:13-14). For example:

(1) Looking in a mirror was forbidden on the Sabbath – The rationale? If you looked in the mirror on the Sabbath day and you saw a gray hair, you might be tempted to pull it out and thus perform work on the Sabbath.

(2) You could not wear false teeth on the Sabbath because if they fell out, you would have to pick them up and you would thus be performing work.

(3) You could not carry a handkerchief on the Sabbath, but you could wear one.

(4) They even debated about a man with a wooden leg, for if his home caught on fire, could he carry his wooden leg out of the house on the Sabbath.

(5) You could spit on the Sabbath, but you had to be careful where you spit. If you spit on the dirt and then scuffed it with your sandal, you would be cultivating the soil and performing work. Spirituality could be determined by where you spit.

Go back to the miracle – They got the man on carrying a load on the Sabbath.

Now, before you make fun of the Pharisees for their list-making, I know folks under grace who have carried the Sabbath codes of the Pharisees over to the Sunday grace folks.

- I know folks who say, you can't go to the beach on Sunday...or go to the movie (T.V. is alright) ...or play ball on Sunday...or eat in a restaurant where they serve beer.. well, skip that one.

Are there some things we shouldn't do on Sunday?

- Is it wrong to _____, fish hunt, play ball, go camping? Anything that keeps you from full worship ought not to be done on Sunday. That includes staying in bed all day.

- Second, if you do something that would be a stumbling block to a weaker brother, you ought not do it.

Well, what did Jesus do when the Pharisees scolded Him for healing on the Sabbath Day?

- Did He drop His head, put His hands inside His robe and say, “I'll never do it again?”

- No! He confronted them. He wouldn't tolerate their intolerance.

- The only people Jesus ever spoke harshly to were the people who had all the answers.

*Note John 5:17

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

. Go back to the creation in Gen. 1. After each one of the six days it says that “the evening and the morning were the ___ day.” But when it comes to the seventh day, it doesn't say that – why? Because on the seventh day He continued to work – controlling the universe. I'm glad He didn't stop working!

. In that sense, God the Father did not break the Sabbath, nor did Jesus. But that upset them the more, for He claimed God was His Father!

III. The Mastery of Legalism

-There are three stages of spiritual maturity – Thou shalt not ...Thou shalt...Thou.

If we try to add anything to grace, we destroy it – works, baptism, church.

-A farmer had a neighbor who was legalistic. He could not get him to see that trying to add to grace destroyed grace. He got him to make a wooden gate. When he delivered it, the farmer took an ax and began to cut the gate. The neighbor said, “It's perfect the way it is.” “No, I must add something to it.” It was ruined when he got through adding cuts to the gate. When we try to add anything to grace, we ruin it!

The Miracle That Got Jesus Killed

John 5:1-18

While reading the text when we come to John 5:3b-4, your Bible may not have these verses in them. The earliest and best Greek manuscripts do not have the words, “waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.” Only the KJV and the NKJV record these words and, then, some KJV give a footnote that these words are not found in the best text.

How do you explain that? These words were given at first as a footnote to explain John 5:7 when it says that the water was “troubled.” Later it was added as though it was part of the text. Some scribe inserted these words to show that THESE PEOPLE BELIEVED THAT AN ANGEL STIRRED UP THAT WATER AND GAVE IT ITS HEALING POWERS.

-We do know that this pool was fed by an intermittent spring and the water would flow into this pool at certain intermittent times and when it did so it caused a little bubbling and the people believed that was the stuff that had the healing power.

-We do not know what gave the water the healing powers. It may have been like the mineral springs or hot spring that today bring soothing to people or, if God wanted to send an angel, He could have done so.

-To say this does not mean that I don't believe in the inerrancy of scripture, because I'll assure you that I do. Whether it belongs in scripture or not is not worth an argument. To me it is not the essential thing because there is something far more important here. However, I did want to give this word of explanation.

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There are some phrases or colloquialisms that come from the Bible that most folks didn't know came from the Bible.

- Speaking of someone who is ignorant, we may say, “They don't even know their right hand from their left hand.” That saying actually comes from Jonah 4:11

- Sometimes we say, “I escaped by the skin of my teeth.” That phrase is found in Job 19:20.

Then there are some sayings that we attribute to the Bible that are not found in the Bible. Like:

- “Spare the rod and spoil the child.”

- or, this one: “God helps those who help themselves.” Actually, just the opposite is true. God helps those who CAN'T help themselves.

-That's the very nature of salvation. God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Rom. 5:6

Here is a man who has had no strength for 38 years. This man who has no power is about to meet the All-Powerful One.

This is an important miracle because it marks the turning point in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. From this point on, Jesus will be faced with growing hostility and unbelief until it culminates in the religious leaders taking Him to Golgotha and He is nailed to the cross.

As we look at this miracle that got Jesus killed, I want you to see:

I. The Compassion of Jesus – John 5:1-6

Bethesda was no small pool like a swimming pool. It was a gigantic double-pool with five columns covered by a roof to shade the sick folks.

This is really a depressing, miserable picture. It was little more than a human dumping ground for sick folks. All around the pool were a variety of miserable sick folks with all kinds of sicknesses. Some were blind; others were lame. Many were “impotent”, which means “without strength.”

-Here was this man who had some type of infirmity for 38 years, almost four decades. He has a very serious and debilitating disease.

He is lying at the pool of Bethesda. The name “Bethesda” means “House of Mercy.” That's what all these folks needed – mercy.

-But for this man it was not a house of mercy, but a house of misery, for in all the time he had been there, others made it into the pool before him. Time and again his dream of stepping into the pool first were dashed and time and again he was disappointed and had to drag his broken body back to his old pallet and wait for another time of disappointment.

This is a sad picture of the lost sinner in his helplessness, his hopelessness, his brokenness, his blindness and uselessness before the Lord.

-Even though a lost person may be healthy of body, they are sick in their soul and separated from God.

-Inside the lost man's soul is the sickness of twisted pleasure, forbidden thoughts of lust, secret thoughts of revenge, bitter thoughts of ill-will toward others, and petty thoughts of jealousy.

Now watch our sympathetic, compassionate Savior – John 5:5-6

Did you notice that Jesus knew everything about this man before He ever spoke to him? He knew what was wrong with him and that he had been there a long time; yet, Jesus reached out to him anyway. What a wonderful picture of grace.

Could I point out that there were many sick folks there, but Jesus reached out to just this one man.

-It is not the will of God to heal every person who is sick. I point that out because some teach that God will heal every sickness IF you have enough faith.

-These same folks teach that if you are sick and you ask Him to heal you and He doesn't heal you, it's because you did not have

enough faith. I have known some of God's children who are under guilt because they asked God to heal them and they are still sick and they think the reason is that they don't have enough faith. That is not so and that is not what the Bible teaches.

It wasn't this man's faith that healed him. He had no faith in Jesus. In fact, in John 5:13 we are told that he didn't even know who Jesus was.

-It wasn't faith that healed this man; it was the sovereign will of God that healed him.

-His faith didn't produce his healing; his healing produced his faith!

Someone has said that God does heal ALL of His saints: Some He heals down here; some He heals up there.

In John 5:6, Jesus asked this man what seems to be a silly question. "Do you want to be made well?" It may sound like a silly question, but Jesus never asks silly questions.

-Truth is, some folks Enjoy Bad Health. They enjoy telling you how bad off they are. Their sickness is part of their identity. If they get well, it would take away the attention and sympathy they are getting. Some would lose the good living they are getting from the government if they get well. They'd have to go to work and take responsibility in life. It would take away their excuse for being lazy. They had rather live off of other folks.

-John 5:7 seems to indicate that's where this man was.

What Jesus is really saying is, "Do you really want to be changed?"

Let me ask you: "Do you want to get well-spiritually? Do you truly want your sin to be cleansed? Your guilt removed? That habit broken? Your anger dissolved? Your bitterness uprooted? That relationship restored?"

-Jesus is dealing with the will of this man. Jesus knows one of the greatest barriers to our faith is often our unwillingness to be made whole.

-The problem of many lost people is not that they don't know how to be saved; the problem is their will. They are not willing to give up their sin; or, they just don't want to be saved. They are comfortable in their sin. They don't want to change.

II. The Challenge of Jesus –John 5:8-9

Don't miss two things:

- The last part of 5:9 says, "and on the same day was the Sabbath." Jesus intentionally healed this man on the sabbath day. Yet, Jesus knew what Ex. 20:8-11 said.

- Jesus asked the healed man to do something that He knew would bring a reaction from the religious leaders - "take up your bed and walk." Notice 5:10

III. The Criticism of Jesus – John 5:10-18

Jesus intentionally did things on the Sabbath day to get a reaction from the religious leaders. Why? Did He do it just to make them hate Him?

-No, but He had to meet them at the point of their need before they could even receive Him or reject Him.

Jesus knew that He was going to die for the sin of man. That's why He came into the world.

Two things would get Jesus killed:

(1) He would confront legalism.

(2) He declared Himself God, equal with His Father. John 5:18

(1) He confronted Legalism

-Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:6 "The letter (of the Law) kills (man's inability to keep the Law sentenced

him to eternal death), but the spirit (the Holy Spirit) gives life (only Jesus Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit can produce eternal life in one who believes).

Ex. 20 says we're not supposed to work on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given to man so he would have one day out of seven to worship God and to rest and replenish and refresh his body and spirit. The Spirit of the Sabbath Law was that we were not to do anything for personal gain.

-The Sabbath Law was meant to be a Blessing to man. Instead, all the legalistic details made it a Burden to man.

Jesus intentionally confronted their Sabbath legalism.

- Matt. 12:1-8 Jesus goes through the corn fields, plucks grain and eats it because they were hungry. When the Pharisees criticized

Him, He said, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

- Luke 6:6-11 Jesus heals a man with a withered hand in the synagogue. When they criticize Him, He says, "Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath, to save life or destroy it?"

- Luke 13:10-17 Jesus heals a woman with a spirit of infirmity for 18 years. When they criticized Him, He put them to shame and when He did, they were filled with fury toward Him.

They cared nothing about this man being healed. All they saw was the "abuse" of their legalism. Jesus wouldn't have told him to pick up his bed if it had been against God's Law.

(2) He declared Himself God, equal to His Father – John 5:18; John 10:33

Jesus was not speaking blasphemy for making Himself equal with God, For He Is God.

Blasphemy is when the liberal comes along and says that Jesus is not God.

-Blasphemy is for the cults like the Jehovah's witness to come along and say that Jesus is some sort of sub-god.

He is God! Have you declared Him Lord in your life?

Apparently, the healing of the cripple did not even cause a stir among the other sick folks there that day. You would have thought that they would have all been crying out for healing. However, if they did, the Scriptures are silent about it. You would think that when a lost world saw old sinners saved by the Grace of God, it would have an impact on them. However, they usually just pass it by and remain totally wrapped up within themselves and carry on their business as usual. What a shame! Jesus passes by where they are and they never even notice! If they do, He is perceived as no more than a nuisance. That is sad but true!

Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come.

Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light, Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of my sickness into Thy health, out of my want and into Thy wealth.

Out of my sin and into Thyself, Jesus, I come to Thee.

Christ's Claims to His Deity

John 5:16-30

The most hotly debated question by modern historians and theologians is, "Who is Jesus Christ?" "What is His true identity?"

-Conservative Bible believers declare that He is the Divine Son of God come in the flesh. He is God! He is the God-Man! He is as much God as if He were not man and He is as much man as if He were not God. He is the God-man!

-Liberals, cult members, and unbelievers have attempted to explain away His deity. They see Him as some sub-god; a good man, a moral teacher, maybe a model to follow, but certainly not someone who can save you.

The Jews of Jesus' day, motivated by their own bitter jealousy, accused Him of being a Samaritan (John 8:48) who was demon-possessed (John 7:20; John 8:52), insane (John 10:20), and of illegitimate birth (John 8:41).

-Although they could not deny Jesus' mighty power, they discounted it as being of satanic origin (Matt. 12:24).

Yet, by His own testimony, Jesus always maintained and claimed to be God incarnate in human flesh.

-He often spoke of having preexisted in heaven before coming into this world – John 8:23.

-Jesus assumed the prerogatives of deity. He claimed to have control over people's eternal destinies (John 8:24), to have power to answer prayer (John 14:13-14), and to have the right to receive worship, honor, and obedience due to God alone (John 5:23). He also assumed the right to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-11). He further outraged the unbelieving Jews by taking for Himself the covenant name of God, "I AM" (John 8:24, 58).

The key phrase in this passage is in John 5:18 - "making Himself equal with God."

-Jesus spends the next 15 verses claiming to be God. He is the Son of God and God the Son!

Why would Jesus spend so much time talking about His Deity? Because if he were not God, His death that He would die on the cross would have no redemptive value. This truth lays the foundation for the cross.

Three things I want to share with you:

I. Our Lord's Courage – John 5:16-18

John 5 is the turning point in our Lord's earthly ministry. Up to this point He was trusted as a teacher and healer, but, now, He heals a man on the Sabbath day and then when He is asked why He did so, He claims to be equal with God.

-Look at our Lord's courage: Jesus never denied the charge. Instead of denying their accusation, He endorsed it! He does claim to be

equal with God.

- Only God can sustain creation; so does Jesus – Col. 1:17
- Only God can forgive sin; so does Jesus – Luke 7:48
- Only God can raise folks from the dead; so does Jesus – John 11
- Only God can send the Holy Spirit; so does Jesus – John 15:26

Jesus Is God!

II. Our Lord's Claims

Throughout this discourse Jesus spoke of “my Father and I”.

-John 10:30 “I and my Father are one.”

A. Jesus is Equal with His Father in His Person – John 5:17-18

Jesus implies that the seventh day, the Sabbath, wasn't for God's benefit, it was for man's – (Mark 2:27). “God didn't stop work on the seventh day and neither do I, because I'm God.”

-It's true that God rested from His creation on the seventh day – not because He was tired, but because He was finished with creation.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God rests on every other seventh day.

-The only reason God rested on that day was to sanctify the day, to set it apart, to bless it and to set a divine example for man to rest one day a week.

God's work didn't stop on that day. He rested from His creation, but He didn't rest from His upholding.

-If He had stopped His upholding work, the world would have fallen apart one day after it was created. He didn't rest from His love, or from His justice, or from His governmental work.

-Grass doesn't stop growing; flowers don't stop blooming; the sun doesn't stop shining; animals are still fed – even on the Sabbath. He is in control of all of that.

-God is above the Sabbath. He still answers prayer, lifts burdens, controls the weather, even on the Sabbath.

Jesus is saying, “If it's wrong for Me to heal on the Sabbath, then my Father is wrong too, for we are one and we are equal.”

-That means that the heart of the Father and the heart of the Son are one. The will of the Father and the will of the Son are one.

B. Jesus is Equal with His Father in His Work – John 5:19-20

Jesus uses the words “Verily, verily” - Fearless, Forceful, Emphatic - “I'm telling you the truth.”

-He is saying, “You can't accuse me of breaking God's Sabbath, because I don't do anything independently of my Father. Everything I do is what the Father told me to do.”

-When we see Jesus work, we are seeing the Father work. When we hear Jesus talk, we are hearing the Father talk.

C. Jesus is Equal with the Father in His Intelligence and Wisdom: John 5:20

The Father has no secrets from His Son. Jesus comprehends completely the mind of His Father, because He is God. Only God can understand God!

-The word for “love” here is not the expected word “agape,” usually used to describe love in the Godhead. Rather, it is the term for friendship love - “phileo.” It is a personal love that delights to share everything. It pictures companionship.

D. Jesus is Equal with the Father in Power – John 5:21

The O.T. tells of the Father raising the dead: The son of the Shunammite was raised

(2 Kings 4:34-35) and the unidentified man who was made alive by contact with the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:20-21).

-In John 11 Jesus would bring His friend to life. To be able to give life, you must be the source of life.

E. Jesus is Equal with the Father in Imparting Eternal Life – John 5:21, 24-26

The “greater works” of John 5:20 is that of giving spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

-The lost sinner is spiritually lifeless, helpless, dead. He cannot save himself or give himself life. Only Jesus is the source of eternal life.

F. Jesus is Equal with the Father in Judgment Authority – John 5:22, 27-30

Jesus will judge both the saved and the lost. The Father has confidence that the Son's judgment is exactly like His.

III. Our Lord's Challenge – John 5:24

The claims of Jesus demand a response. Our response determines our eternal destiny.

Many years ago, a father and his daughter were walking through the grass on the Canadian prairie. In the distance, they saw a prairie fire; eventually, they realized it would engulf them. The father knew there was only one way to escape. They would quickly begin a fire right where they were and burn a large patch of grass. When the huge fire drew near, they would then stand on the area that had already been burned. When the fire did come, the daughter was frightened, but the father calmly told her, "The flames can't hurt us. We are standing where the fire has already been." Christ paid the penalty for our sins. In Him, we have life and are not condemned because we are in a position where the wrath of God has already been.

Evidence That Demands a Verdict

John 5:18,31-47

John 5 is a turning point in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. Up until this time Jesus has been trusted and respected as a teacher and a healer, but now Jesus does two things that causes the religious leaders to turn against Him – He heals a man on the Sabbath day and he claims to be equal with God. From this point, the religious leaders seek to put Him to death.

Already in John 5, Jesus makes some claims to His Deity.

- 1.He claims to be equal to His Father in His Person. He says that they have the same Nature, the same attributes, and the same will.
- 2.He claims to be equal to His Father in His work. He only does what His Father tells Him to do.
- 3.He claims to be equal to His Father in His Intelligence and wisdom. He understands the mind of His Father.
- 4.He claims to be equal to His Father in Power even to the point of raising the dead back to life.
- 5.He claims to be equal to His Father in imparting eternal life.
- 6.And He claims to be equal to His Father in Judgment authority.

Now, Jesus, as it were, puts Himself on trial to prove that He is equal with God, and is in fact, God – come in flesh.

-He is going to call a number of witnesses to His defense. Then we, as the jury, must deliberate, weigh the evidence, and reach a verdict about Him.

Jesus is about to call four witnesses on His behalf. The word "witness" is a key word in John's Gospel. It is used no less than 47 times in his gospel.

Notice John 5:31 The word "true" here means "valid." In other words, in a court of law, one needs more than one's own testimony. We need other witnesses as reinforcements to the truth.

-By Jewish law, the Validity of any claim had to be verified by two or three witnesses. We need other witnesses as reinforcements to the truth.

-Jesus even declared this to be true – Matthew 18:15-16; Deut. 17:6; Deut. 19:15. Therefore, Jesus' witness alone was not enough.

Jesus, the Master Defense Attorney, produces four witnesses to testify about Himself.

I. The Forerunner's Witness – John 5:33-35

The purpose of John the Baptist's ministry was to prepare the nation of Israel for the Messiah (John 1:23), and to identify Him when He came (John 1:31).

-John 1:15 "John bore witness of Him and said, "This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me."

-Notice John 1:29-34 John had a testimony about who Jesus was.

-John 1:19-23, 25-27 John's testimony supported Jesus' claims to be the Messiah.

Israel had not had a prophet of God for 400 years until John the Baptist came, so his testimony carried considerable weight.

-Since John the Baptist gave testimony concerning Jesus, Jesus now gives testimony concerning John the Baptist – Matt. 11:11; John 5:35

John's burning inner zeal for Jesus made him a shining light in a dark world.

-We are to have the same burning zeal, for Jesus said to His disciples, "You are the light of the world...don't put your light under a basket...but let it shine so that men will see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

-Someone has well said, "The best argument for Christianity is Christians – their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians – when they're self-righteous and smug in half-hearted commitment to Jesus."

II. The Finished Works – John 5:36

The works that Jesus is referring to are the miracles that He performed.

-In His defense, Jesus moves from the verbal to the visual evidence.

-John selected seven "signs" to include in his gospel as proof that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus put a high premium on His miracles and repeatedly pointed to His miraculous works as confirmation of His claim to be the Son of God and the Messiah – John 10:25, 37-38;
John 14:11; Matt. 11:3-5

It was the miracles of our Lord that caused Nicodemus to admit that Jesus was “sent from God” John 3:2
-John 7:31 Many believed He was the Christ because of the miracles.

Let me share seven things related to our Lord's miracles:

- 1.Their number – Jesus performed MANY miracles. There are no less than 35 listed in the Gospels, but the Gospel writers declare that He performed many more. John said that there were so many things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, the world could not contain the books that would be written.
- 2.Their greatness – They were not small miracles, but great and mighty ones.
- 3.They were Public – They were not done in a corner, but before all.
- 4.Their character – They were acts of love, mercy, and compassion.
- 5.They were irrefutable – They were visible and would bear any examination.
- 6.The miracles reveal God. God's very nature, power, and character are seen in the miracles.
- 7.The greatest testimony for Christ is the power to transform the lives of men.

Some liberals try to explain away our Lord's miracles; and, in doing so, they try to take away His deity. But there is one miracle the liberals have never been able to explain away – the last and greatest miracle of His own resurrection from the dead. If He could perform this last, great miracle, why would any hesitate to believe His other miracles?

III. The Father's Word – John 5:32, 37-38

Notice how Jesus introduces His Father (John 5:32) – “There is another”.

-There are two Greek words translated “another”. “Heteros”, from which we get our word “heterosexual”, means “one of a different kind.”

- “Allos”, means “another of the same kind.” Jesus used this same word to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14:16. It means “one just like myself.”

-Jesus is saying, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all alike; they are one of the same kind.”

The gospels record two specific instances in which the Father gave verbal testimony to His Son: at His baptism and at His transfiguration, when “a voice our of heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” Matt.3:17, 17:5

IV. The Faithful Writings – John 5:39, 45-47

The word “search” means “to examine, to investigate, to pour over with diligence”, “for they testify of me.”

-John 5:39 is probably a statement of fact and not a command and could be rendered: “You are searching the scripture, thinking that, in doing so, you have eternal life.”

-The Jewish scribes sought to know the Word of God, but didn't know the God of the Word. They counted the very letters of the text, but they missed the spiritual truths that the text contained.

-It's unfortunate when our “study” of the Bible makes us arrogant instead of humble.

The Jewish leaders thought the scriptures and the study of the scriptures would gain them eternal life. They thought the scriptures rather than God was the source of life.

-It is very possible for a person to become a biblical scholar and not be saved.

-These Jews allowed Bible study to become academic, but did not allow themselves to be drawn closer to God because of it.

-They became so preoccupied with the details of scripture that they missed the truths contained there.

-They enjoyed judging the Word of God, but they would not allow the Word of God to judge them (I've had Bible – teachers like that.)

-Jesus exposed their hearts – John 5:42. They loved their own opinions about the Word of God. Jesus summed their problem up in Matt. 15:8-9

Note John 5:46-47, 37a

-Jesus was saying, “If you want to know if I am who I say I am, just read Genesis on through Malachi and see how everything about my birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection. My earthly role was predicted in detail hundreds of years in advance.”

-There are over 300 specific prophecies that Jesus fulfilled in His first coming.

We are told in O.T. Prophecy about our Lord's lineage:

- In Gen. 9:26-27, we're told that of the three sons of Noah, the Messiah would come through Shem.
- Of the descendants of Shem, we're told the Messiah would come through Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3; Gen. 22:18)
- Of the two sons of Abraham, the Messiah would come through Isaac – Gen. 21:12
- Of the two sons of Isaac He would come through Jacob – Gen. 34:10-12

- Of the 12 sons of Jacob, we're told the Messiah would come, not from the noble Joseph, but from the scoundrel Judah -Gen. 49:10
- Of the descendants of Judah, all were rejected except the family of Jesse – Isa. 11:1-2

- Of the sons of Jesse, all were rejected but the youngest, David – Jer. 23:5

The Lord narrowed down the Messiah's family tree until it could only be a descendant of Abraham through Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Jesse, and David. The first words of the N.T. are: "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matt. 1:1.

- Micah 5:2 – We are told that not only would Jesus be born from David's family, but in David's City – Bethlehem.
- Isa. 7:14 We are told He would be born of a virgin and named Immanuel. Mal. 3:1 4:5 That an Elijah-like figure who would live in the wilderness and cry out a message warning the people to prepare the way of the Lord.
- Isa. 9; Isa.11; Isa. 52; Isa. 53 – We are told of His character traits; that He would be holy, righteous, good, faithful, innocent, zealous, meek, forgiving, loving, full of justice.
- Zech. 9:9 We are told that His ministry would begin in Galilee and would climax in Jerusalem, which the Messiah would humbly enter, riding on a young donkey.
- Ps. 22 We are told that He would be put to death on a cross.

How did the Jews respond to these witnesses and to the Lord?

- John 5:40 "You are not willing to come to me that you may have life"
- John 5:42 "You do not have the love of God in you."
- John 5:43 "You have not received me."
- John 5:44 "You do not seek the honor that comes from the only God."
- John 5:47 "You do not believe His writings."

The Jews listened to our Lord's witnesses and rejected Him. Their decision brought them death.

You have heard the same witnesses. You, in fact, know more than they did. Their decision is given as a warning to us.

It's time for you to make your decision about Christ. It is a matter of eternal life or death!

What will your decision be?

Little Is Much, When God Is in It John 6:1-15

Before we get into the passage itself, let me share some interesting truths with you:

A. Between John 5:47 and John 6:1 there is a large time gap.

I know that in your Bible there is just a little white space, but there is actually a six month time gap. A lot has taken place between these two chapters.

-Jesus has performed many miracles and had taught the people often. Many have been saved. If you want to see how much has gone on during that six months' time, read

Matt. 4:23 thru Matt.14:12 or Mark 1 through half of Mark 6.

-It had been a busy time for our Lord and His disciples. The common people had received Jesus well and He was very popular with them. But the religious leaders had rejected Him. Jesus had also gotten word that John the Baptist had been beheaded and both Jesus and His disciples felt much sorrow and grief because of John's death. You will remember that several of our Lord's disciples had also been disciples of John the Baptist and they loved him.

-Jesus and His disciples were physically exhausted. They needed some rest and relaxation. Jesus planned for them to get away together for a while.

-Mark 6:31 Jesus said to His disciples, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest awhile.

-Jesus told His disciples to get into a boat and go across the Sea of Galilee. It was three miles across the Sea by boat. A crowd of people saw which direction they were going. So, they began to walk the shore-line around the Sea. It was some ten miles to walk the shore-line.

-When John 6:1 says, "After these things," what took place between John 5:47 and 6:1 is what he is referring to.

B. Where did so many people come from – 5,000 plus women and children?

Down in John 6:4 we are told that it was Passover time. Jews from the surrounding towns would make their way to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

-Jesus lifted up His eyes and saw all these people coming to him. One writer said that Jesus and his disciples had been "peopled to

death” and needed a vacation, but it was not to be.

C. This is one of only two creative miracles of our Lord.

Now, I know that in a sense all of our Lord's miracles were creative, but there are only two of His miracles that were creative in a particular creative sense – one was the wine and one was the bread.

Jesus turned water into wine. Jesus made wine without grapes or the fruit of the vine. There was no planting of the vines; no cultivating of the vines; no time period for the grapes to be ripe or to be prepared. He just made something out of nothing.

In this miracle, the fish were rather incidental to the bread. In John 6:13, when it talks about gathering the fragments, it doesn't even mention the fish. The word for fish does not refer to a catfish fillet. They refer to little, tiny sardine like fish that swam in swarms in the Sea of Galilee.

They would pickle the fish and make it into a relish and spread them on the top of the bread to flavor it and to give it a little bit of moisture. It was primarily a miracle of multiplying bread, although the fish were there.

-How beautiful that the two primary creative acts of Jesus Christ speak to us symbolically of His shed blood and His body given for us. These two miracles of our Lord present Him as our crucified Christ.

-Notice John 6:53-54

Three things I want to share with you from this passage:

I. Our Lord's Compassion

When Matthew recorded this incident, he said that when Jesus saw the multitude coming, He had compassion on them and healed their sick and Mark says that Jesus began to teach them.

-Now, it was mid-afternoon. Night was coming and the people were going to need lodging and food. Luke says that the day was beginning to wear away; literally, the day was bending low.

-Most of the people had not eaten since early morning and they were hungry. The disciples realized that something had to be done and so did Jesus, so Jesus asked, “How are we going to handle this?” What was their response?

1. “Let's get rid of the problem by getting rid of the people.”

Matt. 14:15 and Mark 6:36 says that the disciples suggested just sending the people away. Let them find their own food. It's not our problem. Let them fend for themselves.

-I wonder if that's the way the church sees the multitudes. Rather than us having compassion for the lost around us, we just let them fend for themselves.

As you enter one church, you can read these words on the wall of the church:

They will not seek; they must be sought.

They will not come; they must be brought.

They will not learn; they must be taught.

In other words, it's our job to get them here!

2. “Let's raise more money” John 6:5-7

Phillip isn't answering Jesus' question. Jesus asked WHERE they could get bread; not how much it would cost.

-Why did Jesus ask Phillip? We are told the real reason in John 6:6. Phillip needed a test. A test is used to prove something and our Lord wants to prove something to Phillip.

-Jesus knew what He was going to do and He knew He wasn't going to buy bread. He said this to test Phillip. He wanted to put Phillip's faith to the test.

Our Lord often tests like this. I call them test of trust; and they come into everybody's life. Sometimes things happen in our lives for no other reason than to test our trust.

- Remember Gen. 22 when God tested the trust of Abraham by telling him to give his son Isaac?

- Remember in Deut. Where God tested the trust of the children of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness? God tests our trust.

And God gives us a test just past our trust. If God only tested me as far as I already trust him, I'd never get anywhere, would I?

-He never tests us so far that we'll blow our mind or explode. No, but he tests us just past our trust. Why? Because He wants to pull us up to a new level of trust.

-James says the trying of our faith brings patience. It causes us to grow.

Phillip responded like most of us respond.

-We look at our own resources and figure out that we are in an impossible situation. Then we decide it can't be done; Then we get

upset.

-Then we come in desperation and pray. Then we remember a verse, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Christ Jesus."

3. Andrew says: "We don't have much and it's not the best, but we'll have to do with what we've got."

I think Jesus smiled and said, "Andrew, is this really all that you have? What about Me? Don't leave Me out!"

-I think Andrew said to the lad, "Would you give your lunch to Jesus?" The boy, looking into the face of Jesus, responds, "Oh, I would give all that I have to Jesus." The lad extends his small, weak hand with his lunch in it, to the all-powerful hand of Jesus that created the universe.

-What we offer to Jesus may seem small and little, but little is much when God is in it. Anything you give Jesus is a wise investment. God makes the most of our little when our little is the most we can give Him.

Lessons from a Little Lad

1. He shows us that age is no barrier to Christ. Never feel that you are too old or too young to be used of God.

2. God delights to use little things

- A baby moved the heart of Pharaoh's daughter.
- God used a shepherd's rod in the hand of Moses.
- David used a sling and a rock to defeat the enemies of Israel.

3. The lad shows the importance of availability

4. The lad shows that we never know what can happen when we bring someone to Jesus.

II. Our Lord's Command – John 6:10

Phillip and Andrew both failed the faith test, but they passed the obedience test.

-Obedience is always the channel through which faith comes. Your faith will never grow unless you are obeying the Lord.

-Jesus used His disciples in the miracle.

A. He Took It

● I can hear Jesus as He speaks to the lad: "Will you give Me your lunch? All of it; not part of it?" Often, we are willing to give part, but not all to Jesus. Everything he had!

● That's what Jesus is waiting for from us! He never asks us to give Him what we don't have. But he does demand that we give Him all we do have if we want to be a part of what He wishes to do in the lives of those around us.

B. He Blessed It

● As people waited and watched quietly, Jesus stood. Every eye must have focused on Him and every ear tuned to listen to His voice.

● The crowd overheard Him speaking to His Father, thanking God for meeting the physical needs of the people.

● How embarrassing it would have been to thank God for the food for the multitude if it had remained only five loaves and two fish.

-Why did Jesus do that? In blessing it, something was put into it that had not been there before.

-When the boy transferred his lunch to Jesus, it was transformed by Jesus.

-Little will remain little unless we give it to Jesus.

-By the way, I'm glad to see that Jesus was not ashamed to bless the lunch before all those people.

-An old farmer came to town...over-alls and all. He went to a restaurant to eat and when his meal came, he bowed his head and thanked God for the food. Young men saw it and thought they would have some fun with the old farmer. One of them said, "Old man, does everybody on the farm give thanks before they eat?" He said, "Everybody but the hogs."

-When Jesus blessed the lunch, don't you think He asked the Father to bless the boy, too? I think Jesus also thanked the boy for giving Him what was needed for the miracle.

C. He Broke It

We, like the lunch, often need to be broken before we are useable to God. Broken of our pride...our haughty spirit...our stubborn will.

-J. Sidlow Baxter, the great preacher and author, said that in the early years of his ministry he was proud of his degrees and abilities. He went through a period where God was not blessing in his life. He said that it was as if God just took His hand off his life. Broken, he went before God and asked Him, "Why?" God answered, "Sid, I use sparrows; not peacocks."

D. He used It John 6:11-12

-Jesus must have taken the first loaf and broke it in half...given some to John, then Peter, then Phillip, then Andrew...they would give it out and come back to Jesus for more.

-Not one crumb or morsel was passed out to the people that had not first been received from Jesus!

-Everyone was not only fed, but filled also!

-I can see Andrew holding a full basket in his hands when he offered the bread and fish to someone who said, with a mouth full already, "No thanks! I couldn't eat one more bite!" Someone else said, "I don't know when I've had so much to eat."

I think the lad was standing there with a grin, putting his thumbs in his suspenders and rocking back on his heels.

-Imagine the wonderful joy and contentment that boy felt when he saw what Jesus did with his lunch. There is no way he could have imagined what would come from his simple offering. Likewise, you and I cannot imagine what will come from our lives being surrendered to the will and purpose of God.

-What if the little boy had not given Jesus his lunch that day? He was to be a blessing or a curse by what he did with his all.

-When he gave Jesus his lunch, he may have thought that he would not see it again. He did see it again and much more. The same is true in our lives.

-When the boy got home, I wonder if he didn't say... "Mom, you should have seen it. The more I gave Him...He just made more and more out of it. I wonder if it would be that way with everything I give Him?" You know the answer, don't you?

Want to see a miracle? Give Him all that you are!

Fragments

John 6:12-13

Why gather the fragments?

-Was Jesus being environmentally friendly? Was He just making sure that He left the hill-side just as He found it?

-Or...was He giving His disciples, and us, a final lesson?

There is an old saying, "Waste not, want not."

God owns the cattle on a thousand hills; yet, He said, "Pick up the fragments."

-The Natural thing to do was to just let the fragments lie.

-Fragments are not the crumbs, but the original broken pieces that Jesus broke.

We are so wasteful and wastefulness is sin.

-When I first came to this church, I noticed on all the light switch covers the words, "Switch it off." I like that. It's a matter of stewardship.

Our God provides us with all things richly to enjoy; but He looks to see what we will do with a cup of cold water.

-Don't be careless with life's fragments. As stewards of God, we shall face a day of accountability.

"Ships Sink by Little Leaks!" Gather the fragments; make sure nothing is lost.

They gathered the fragments in baskets. The Greek word for basket is Kophinos, which is a Jewish wicker traveling basket, like the one carried by the Jews through the wilderness.

Why gather the fragments? To teach the value of God's gifts and to appreciate His blessings more.

-God may even allow difficult times to come to teach us the importance of this truth.

Notice that it was Jesus who organized this clean-up crew, and the crew was His twelve disciples.

-Service to Jesus is not all glamour and glory. It involves some very humbling duties as well.

-If you can't accept the humbling duties, you will not do much for Christ.

-There may have been honor in distributing the food to the people, but the clean-up afterward is another story.

-Proverbs 6:6-11 Don't be careless with the fragments.

-What kind of fragments do we need to pay attention to?

I. The Fragment of Time

1.Eph. 5:16 "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Ps. 90:12 "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom."

2. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Do you love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of."

V. The Fragment of Right Choices

Only one life to live

It will soon be passed

Only what is done for Christ will last.

Gather up the fragments...that nothing may be lost!!

When the Storms of Life Come

John 6:15-21

Our Lord had just performed the biggest miracle He had ever performed: the feeding of the 5,000 with the loaves and fishes.

-Matthew's gospel tells us that after Jesus performed the miracle, the crowd wanted to make Him king. The people thought that if He were their King, they would NOT have to bake bread or catch fish again. But Jesus would not be their King for those reasons, so Jesus instructs His disciples to get into a ship and to go to the other side, and He would meet them there.

The disciples were not ready for what happened next: The disciples started across the sea about sundown. It was only about eight miles across the sea. Normally, it would have taken about two hours to cross the sea, but a storm came up!

-They had been toiling in rowing for 7-8 hours and were only about half way there (About 3 or 4 miles out, fighting for their lives. They are afraid they might go down in the storm when Jesus comes walking to them on the water.

What do you do when the storms of life come? And the storms do come in life!

-Someone has said that all of us are either IN a storm, just coming OUT of a storm, or headed FOR a storm. Not a storm on the sea, but other kinds of storms: storms of Disease, or Debt, or Domestic Problems, or Death.

Storms bother us a lot, more than they do the Lord. In Mark 4, there was another storm on the sea and the disciples were in that storm, too. Jesus was with them in the boat, but He was in the stern of the boat, asleep on a pillow! Only when the disciples woke him and asked Him for help did the Lord get up and calm the sea.

Storms do come in life and our relationship and our fellowship with the Lord determines our response to the storm and to the Lord.

A little girl walked to and from school daily. Though the weather that morning was questionable and clouds were forming, she made her daily trek to the elementary school. As the afternoon progressed, the winds whipped up, along with thunder and lightning. The mother of the little girl felt concerned that her daughter would be frightened as she walked home from school and she herself feared that the electrical storm might harm her child. Following the roar of thunder, lightning, like a flaming sword, would cut through the sky. Full of concern, the mother quickly got into her car and drove along the route to her child's school. As she did so, she saw her little girl walking along, but at each flash of lightning, the girl would look at the streak of light and smile. When the mother's car drew up beside the child, she lowered the window and called to her, "What are you doing? Why do you keep stopping?" The child answered, "I am trying to look pretty. God keeps taking my picture."

Three things I want you to see about the storms of life:

I. The Meaning of Storms

Why do storms come in our life? Let me give you three possible reasons:

A. Storms in your life can mean you are OUT of the will of God

It was true in Jonah's life. God told him to "Arise, go to Nineveh...but Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord...but the Lord sent out a great wind." Jonah 1:2-4

Understand that God sent the storm, not to do Jonah bad, but to turn him around. The storm was an act of grace and mercy. When we get out of God's will, He often sends storms into our lives, not to do us harm, but to turn us around.

B. Storms in your life can mean you are IN the will of God

That may sound like a contradiction, but not so.

-When Paul was beaten and put in prison at Philippi, he was In the will of God.

-We need to be careful when we try to interpret why folks are going through storms and struggles.

-Let me take you to a hill called Mt. Calvary. Jesus is there with nails in His hands and feet, a crown of thorns on His head, and His body is limp upon a cross. Why? Because He was doing the will of His Father.

-Remember: These men were in the storm because Jesus "constrained" them to get in a ship and cross the sea. The trip was our Lord's idea!

C. Storms in your life can mean you are God's chosen person to be an example of faithfulness to God!

That was true in Job's life. Satan told God that if He would let him send storms in Job's life and tear down the hedge around him and let Satan at him, then Job would curse God and die. Job proved Satan wrong when the storms came.

Is it possible to have growing faith without that faith being tested? I don't think so! There are some lessons we cannot learn about ourselves and about our Lord without storms in our life.

I walked a mile with pleasure,
She chatted all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with sorrow,
And not a word she said.
But oh, the things I learned from sorrow
When sorrow walked with me.

Isn't that true? We are enlarged when we are in distress. Faith, like film, is developed best in the dark. I don't know why that is, but it is true. The plan of God for your spiritual growth and mine includes storms and trials.

God never makes a mistake when He allows storms to come into our lives.

He Maketh No Mistake
My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
but in my soul, I'm glad I know,
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But still I'll trust the Lord to lead
For He doth know the way.

Tho' night may be dark and it may seem
That day will never break;
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.

There's so much I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust
and leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make.
Though all the way, tho' dark to me,
He made not one mistake.

A.M. Overton

Often God puts us in the storm to discover our "Give-up" point.

-For nine hours they had been rowing. They were still about four miles out, which means, they had rowed about six hours and had gotten almost nowhere.

-It's a fact of life that sooner or later all of us want to quit. There's not a person among us who has never experienced the desire to quit in some endeavor or activity.

-You've heard the old cliché: "When the going gets tough, some of us want to find the nearest exit." We want to quit. And yet, if we do what we are supposed to do in the midst of life's struggles and frustrations, we refuse to quit.

II. The Ministry in the Storm

What does Jesus do when we are in the storm? We have to go back to Mark 6:45-52 to see what Jesus was doing while His disciples were in the storm.

A. He Prays for Them

Both Matt. 14:23 and Mark 6:46 tell us that Jesus went up a mountain alone to pray. From that mountaintop, Jesus had a perfect vantage point. He saw the dark clouds as they began to roll and boil. He saw the sea as the waves began to rise. He saw the disciples rowing desperately. He saw the whole thing (Mark 6:48). Jesus saw it all, and He was praying. The disciples may not have known that Jesus had His eyes upon them, but He did. They couldn't see Him, but He saw them. He never took His eyes off of them. And there on that mountain, Jesus was interceding for them.

-Are you in the midst of a storm? If so, you can say, "His eyes are on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." Jesus is watching over you and He is praying for you.

B. He sees Them – Mark 6:48

He knew where they were and He knows where we are.

C. He Came to Them – Mark 6:48

Did you notice: He comes walking on the water, the very thing that was their problem.

-Why was He walking on the water? It was not just theatrics; I can assure you. He wanted to teach them, and us, that whatever is over our head is already under His feet.

Notice: He didn't come to them until the "fourth watch". That is sometime before 4:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M. Why?

-Did you ever notice how often God brings us to the edge, but does not allow us to be taken under?

-He didn't show Abraham the ram when he left home to take his three – day journey; nor did He show him the ram after he built the altar and tied his son, Isaac, to it. The ram was only seen after Abraham raised his knife to kill his beloved son!

Why didn't Jesus come sooner? He wanted to get as much as He could out of the lesson He was trying to teach them. He deals with us the same way.

D. He talked with Them – Mark 6:50

He spoke words of Assurance and Encouragement. "It is I; be not afraid" Literally, "Don't be afraid, I AM."

If Jesus doesn't deliver you out of the storm, He will deliver you THROUGH the storm.

Til the Storm Passes By

In the dark of the midnight have I oft hid my face
while the storm howls above me and there's no hiding place.

'Mid the crash of the thunder precious Lord hear my cry.

Keep me safe till the storm passes by.

Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more,

Till the clouds roll forever from the sky,

Hold me fast, let me stand in the hollow of Thy hand.

Keep me safe till the storm passes by.

Many times Satan whispered, There is no need to try

For there's no end of sorrow, there's no hope by and by.

But I know Thou art with me, and tomorrow I'll rise

Where the storms never darken the skies.

When the long night has ended, and the storms come no more,

Let me stand in Thy Presence on that Bright Peaceful shore.

In the land where the tempest never comes

Lord, may I dwell with Thee when the storm passes by.

Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more.

Till the clouds roll forever from the sky,

Hold my hand, let me stand, in the hollow of your hand,
Keep me safe til the storm passes by.

III. The Message of the Storm

1. There will never be a time or place where Jesus won't come to you...in good times, yes...but in the storms, too.
2. You cannot learn of His Ability without Adversity.
3. You will be made a better person because of the storm.

If He doesn't make it calm Around you, He will make it calm Within you.

"I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more;
But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me, now safe am I.
Love Lifted Me! Love Lifted Me! When nothing else could help,
Love Lifted Me!"

Reasons for Following Jesus John 6:22-36

These verses take place the day after Jesus fed the 5,000 plus with the lad's lunch.

-It had been a busy day and night for Jesus and His disciples. You will remember that they had wanted to get away from the crowds and rest for awhile...but, instead, Jesus ended up teaching and healing all day and, in the evening, feeding the crowd. Then, as it was getting dark, Jesus sent His disciples away into the sea and He was going to meet them on the other side. But a storm came and Jesus had to save them out of the storm.

-Now Jesus and the disciples were on the other side of the sea. The crowd wasn't going to let up. They went back across the sea also. They knew the disciples had gotten in a boat to cross over and that Jesus had gone alone to be by Himself, but when they saw the disciples, to their surprise, Jesus was there, too.

-John 6:25 "How did you get here?" Notice that Jesus did not answer their question. If He had, they wouldn't have believed Him! (Well, I sent my disciples ahead, but a storm came up and they were afraid so I walked on the water to where they were and Peter saw me and wanted to walk on the water to me...I told him to come on and when we got to the boat together, we got into the boat and, by way of another miracle, as soon as we got into the boat, the boat immediately was 3 miles from the shore and we got here in the blink of an eye.) Do you think they would have believed that?

Instead of answering their question, Jesus confronts them because of their wrong motives for following Him.

-By the way, Jesus knows all about us. He knows our motives:

- Why are you in this service? Habit? Duty? It's expected of You? Because you love the Lord Jesus and want to be in His presence and learn more of Him?
- Jesus was able to look inside their hearts and see their motives. They could not fool Him – nor can we.

Why did they follow Jesus? Why do we follow Him?

A. Some followed for Entertainment

-Jesus put on a pretty good show. They liked it when Jesus dazzled them...He was the best thing going.

- Watch Him take five loaves and two fish and feed 5,000
- Watch Him touch a leper that everyone else was even afraid to get close to and make his skin as soft as a baby's.
- Watch Him spit on the ground, make mud, put it on a blind man's eyes and cause him to see.

-He did things never seen before. They wanted to be entertained but not involved.

-I've seen that in churches. Bring on the food and the singing; Bring on the good preaching; Bring on the good times, but don't ask me to be involved.

-If we are not careful, we will end up like so many who want to be entertained instead of involved. We will sit in our pews and evaluate the singing and preaching to see what it does for us, but we are not willing to get involved with our life.

B. Some followed for Enjoyment John 6:26-27

-They just wanted another meal. They only saw Jesus as the "Bread Man"; not for their souls, but for their bodies.
-They substituted the Physical for the Spiritual.
-Phil. 3:18-19 "Whose god is their belly." Their true appetites were fleshly and they hungered for the temporal rather than the eternal.
-They missed the real value of Jesus --- Bread for their souls; not their bodies.

- I heard about two boys who broke into a hardware store; Not to steal anything, but here's what they did: They switched the prices on everything. They had nails selling for \$200.00 each...hammers were .50 a dozen...Lawnmowers were .06 a lb.

- That's what the world has done. Our souls are of eternal value. You can't put a price on a good name and a good character; But the world would cheapen a man's reputation ...his name, character, values.

-Notice John 6:27

C. Some followed for Evidence John 6:28-36

-Jesus has just claimed to be greater than Moses...and, more, to be God's Son, the True Bread that came down from heaven. So, they must trust Him for eternal life.

-Their response – John 6:30-31 – Prove it...Top That!

-They were saying, "We don't need you, Jesus. Our moral life will get us to heaven."

-Here are a group of swimmers, swimming to Hawaii:

- A swimming instructor swims 25 miles
- A CEO swims 10 miles
- The citizen of the year swims one mile
- A bumb swims 15 yards

None made it to Hawaii. Some got closer than others, all drowned.

-No one is morally good enough to make it to heaven. You have to be perfect to get to heaven. ONLY JESUS can impute His righteousness to us.

D. Some followed for Enrichment

They just want to be with Jesus and let him do for them that that only He could do.

There were three reactions:

(1) Open Defection John 6:60-66

"This is a hard saying" ...hard to accept

(2) Firm Determination John 6:67-69

If all left, Peter would not

(3) Subtle Deception John 6:70-71

Why did Jesus choose Judas?

(a) To Display His sovereignty, Jesus knew what he would do from the time He chose Judas.

(b) Judas provided an impartial witness to the moral excellence of Christ. He was as close to Jesus as any man in public and in private. If there had been a flaw, he would have spotted it. Yet, he said, "I have betrayed innocent blood." (Matt. 27:4)

(c) Judas shows us that we may expect to find hypocrites among the followers of Jesus. Judas did many of the things the other disciples did. He left home and family, listened to Jesus teach and preach, went with the other disciples on mission trips, and not one suspected him to betray Jesus. They trusted him so much they even made him treasurer.

(d) In Judas is seen the awesome power of sin. Imagine spending three years with Jesus; in His very presence. Judas saw our Lord's love for sick and sinful humanity, heard His wisdom in His teachings, watched His communion with His Father, saw divine love in action. Now, imagine betraying such a one. What a powerful grip sin can have on a man!

(e) Judas supplies the sinner with a solemn warning: A person may be close to salvation and not be saved.

- He kissed the door to heaven and went to hell!
- Examine yourself to see if you be in the faith.
- Matt. 7:21-23

John records only seven of our Lord's miracles and he uses these miracles to record a discourse from our Lord.

- Jesus feeds 5,000 with bread and fish and then gives His discourse, claiming to be the Bread of Life.
- Jesus heals a blind man, and then claims to be the Light of the world.
- Jesus claims to be the Resurrection and the Life and then raises Lazarus from the dead.

This is the first of seven "I Am" statements in the Gospel of John. Jesus declares:

~I Am the Bread of Life – John 6:35 ~I Am the Resurrection and the Life – John 11:25
~I Am the Light of the World – John 8:12; John 9:5 ~I Am the Way, Truth, Life – John 14:6
~I Am the door – John 10:7,9 ~I Am the Vine – John 15:1,5
~I Am the Good Shepherd – John 10:11,14

These discourses, more than anything else, presents our Lord's deity.

-These "I Am" statements are set against the background of the burning bush in Exodus 3. Moses asked the God of the burning bush who was sending him to deliver the people of God from Egyptian bondage, "What is your name?" God said, "My name is I Am" - "I always have been; I am now; and I will always be."

-There is no absolute definition of God! Any attempt to define God is to limit Him! It is not possible to describe or even to declare His total majesty, glory, might, power, knowledge or person!

-He declares that He is the covenant – keeping God – The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In this first "I Am" statement, Jesus takes on the Name and the Identity of God and links Himself to God the Father. He declares to be of Divine origin in His Incarnation because He declares Seven times in John 6 that He came down from Heaven –

John 6:33,38,41,42,50,51,58

-In other words, Jesus claimed to be God!

This is a hard discourse that Jesus gave on the Bread of Life. It was hard for the people then to understand and accept, and it's hard for us today to accept.

- John 6:41 – They murmured (grumbled, complained) at Him
- John 6:52 – They strove (argued, quarreled) among themselves
- John 6:60 - "This is a hard saying; who can understand (accept) it?"
- John 6:66 – Many walked away or left Him
- John 6:67 – He even asked His 12 men, "Do you want to leave, too?"

Some church denominations have made these verses even more confusing because they misapply these verses to the Lord's Supper.

-Some take John 6:52-58 literally and say that Jesus is teaching cannibalism.

-The Roman Catholic church use these verses to teach transubstantiation: "Trans" means across; and "substance", referring to the body and blood of the Lord Jesus. They teach that when you take of the Lord's Supper, a miracle takes place. They teach that as you take the wafer in your mouth, it actually becomes the body of Christ, and as you take the wine, it actually becomes the blood of Christ. Thus, you have His strength, spiritually and His life eternally; thus, you have the life of Christ in you, which is eternal life.

There are several problems with this:

1. This could not refer to communion, because our Lord didn't institute the Lord's Supper until almost a year after this discourse.
2. These verses were spoken to unbelievers and the Lord's Supper is intended only for believers.
3. The Lord's Supper is taken as a visible reminder of our Lord's sacrifice for us.

Three things I want to share with you:

I. Our Lord's Claim – John 6:35, 48, 51

It is interesting that Jesus was born in Bethlehem – the house of bread

The question is, "Where did Jesus come from?" Seven times in John 6, Jesus declares that He came down from heaven.

-That means that Jesus existed and existed As God before He was born on this earth.

-He didn't just claim that He was going to heaven, but that He had already been in heaven. No wonder folks said, "That is a hard saying." If we had been there that day, it would have been a hard saying for us, too.

Jesus then makes a strange suggestion. He said, "Many of you don't believe me, do you? What is it going to take for you to believe?"

-Then He makes the strange suggestion – John 6:62 "What if I put everything in reverse so you can see with your own eyes: me as I am now; then at age 12; then as a baby; then ascending back to heaven where I came from."

-It's like watching a film in reverse. Have you ever watched America's Funniest Home Videos, and watched as they put it in reverse?

-The main issue here is, "Where did Jesus come from?"

II. Our Lord's Comparison – John 6:49-51

When Jesus called Himself "The Living Bread", He was not claiming to be exactly like the manna in Moses' day. He was claiming to be even Greater!

- Manna was only for Israel; Jesus was for the whole world.
- Manna only sustained life; Jesus gives life.
- The Jews ate the manna daily for 40 years and eventually died; when you receive Jesus as the Bread of Life one time, you will live forever and never die.
- There was no cost to God in sending the manna each day, but it cost the Father the life of His Son to send the Living Bread.
- The manna was temporary and physical; Jesus, the Living Bread is eternal and spiritual.
- Jesus not only gives bread; He IS Bread.
- This was one piece of bread that was hard for the crowd to swallow!

III. Our Lord's Challenge – John 6:58

The heart of these verses is two-fold:

Jesus wants us to know who He is and where He came from. He is God and He came down from heaven to provide a sacrifice for sinful man.

Jesus wants us to know How a person is saved.

A. Salvation is God's work on man's Behalf – John 6:35,37,44

These are very important verses. There is a theological argument that rages today on election or free will.

-There are some who put all their eggs in the basket of election; that's called Calvinism.

-There are others who put all their eggs in the basket of free will.

-You say, "Preacher, can you reconcile the two?" No, sir. And you can't either. Any man who says that he can is a liar or deceived or both.

-Someone asked Charles Spurgeon to reconcile the two, and he said, "I don't have to reconcile old friends."

Look at John 6:37: Election and free will are both in this verse.

-"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" states a truth, and that is election.

-But wait a minute! "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" is also true, and "him that cometh to me" is free will. I don't know how to reconcile them, but they are both true. The Father gives men to Christ but men have to come. And the ones that come are the ones, apparently, whom the Father gives to Him.

-You say, "Well, what if I'm not one of God's elect and I come to Christ?" Well, God will make an exception in your case because you came to Him." Friend, if you come to Christ, you will be the elect!

-The wonderful thing is that it is God's will for all to come and for none to perish. "Whosoever will, let him come!"

-How can you know if you are one of the elect? Come to Jesus in faith!

Notice John 6:4 Without God's drawing, no one would ever come to Christ.

-The word "draw" speaks of a Divine activity, sometimes called conviction, when by the power of God's grace, He pulls us from sin's darkness and pulls our heart toward His glorious Son. With His loving kindness He tenderly, yet powerfully, wins our hearts to Himself.

-Drawing implies resistance. Christ draws all men, but not all respond to Him. The offer of salvation is for all to be saved, but we must all make the choice and we are all responsible for our choice.

B. What does God "draw" us to do?

John uses several terms as we respond to His drawing:

- John 6:35 – coming to Jesus and believing on Jesus

Joh 6:35

(35) And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

- John 6:40 – to behold or see with the eyes of faith

Joh 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day

- John 6:45 – to listen to Jesus

Joh 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God.

Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Now Jesus introduces a new metaphor: Eating His Flesh – John 6:52-58

Jesus is speaking figuratively, referring to His whole person. This is a figure of speech which means to appropriate and assimilate Christ into our own lives by faith until we are joined as one.

Notice John 6:56 The analogy of eating suggests several things:

1. Bread must be internalized or it will do no good

You may examine bread or study it, smell it, read about it, but it will be useless until you eat it; take it into yourself.

2. The Holy Spirit must create a hunger and awaken our spiritual need for Christ.

God must give the lost man a hunger for forgiveness, deliverance, peace, hope, cleansing.

3. Eating is personal

Watching someone else eat will do me no good. No one else can eat for me.

4. What I eat becomes a part of me.

C. What does God promise to those who receive the Bread of Life?

1. Life – John 6:57

2. Everlasting Life – John 6:47, 51, 58

3. He will be secure in Christ – John 6:37, 39

4. God will raise him up bodily on the last day – John 6:39, 40, 44, 54

5. We will abide (be joined to) in Christ both here on earth and in heaven – John 6:56

Jesus offers a beautiful invitation in John 6:35.

John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Spiritual Defections

John 6:60-71

John 6 begins with thousands of folks following Jesus, and it ends with all leaving Him except His twelve and one of them is going to betray Him.

Some of the saddest experiences of my life have been those times when I have seen those whom I thought were really committed to Christ, but then watch them walk away from Christ.

-How often have I heard something like this, "I don't know what happened to them, but they no longer walk with the Lord."

Spiritual Defection!

-They disappoint their pastor; their church; their family!

-Jude 12 says that they are like "clouds without water, carried about by the winds." The picture is like this: It is dry and it has been dry for a long time. The grass in the yard is turning brown and dying. The garden has just about dried up and if it doesn't rain soon, everything you've planted and worked so hard for will die. Then you see a large dark cloud in the sky. The cloud shows such promise that rain is on its way. It even smells like rain! Then the wind begins to blow and the cloud breaks up and no rain comes. You're disappointed!

Pastors and those in leadership positions in the church do all they can to continue success and growth in ministry.

-But in John 6, Jesus seems to be doing all He can to drive away as many people as He can from His ministry. I mean, we are always trying to find a successful ENLARGEMENT campaign; here, Jesus seems to run a successful ENSMALLMENT campaign!

If Jesus is doing anything in these verses, He is issuing a call to commitment.

-Jesus knows that many of these followers are merely there for what they can get for their flesh. Jesus lays down the gauntlet and calls for every one of those followers to commit to Him and to Him alone.

-He purifies the ranks of His disciples, effectively weeding out most of those who are not genuine in their faith or commitment.

We are living in a day when many are walking away from the things of the Lord. This shouldn't surprise us because it is exactly what the Bible said would happen in the last days.

-Thess. 2:3; 2 Tim. 3:5; 1 John 2:19

Why do some leave the things of the Lord?

Jesus has just fed 5,000 with the lad's lunch. The crowd's motto is, "Miracles – yes! Doctrine-no!"

-They say, "Who wants to listen to that? I don't want to hear that I'm a sinner or that there is judgment to come," and the sad thing is that many Pastors accommodate them.

After Jesus fed them, they wanted to make Him King (John 6:15), but after they heard His message (John 6:26-65), they wanted nothing more to do with Him.

What were the hard sayings?

1. The Doctrine of Sonship – He came down from Heaven
2. The Doctrine of Sacrifice – Eating His flesh and drinking His blood
3. The Doctrine of Sovereignty – God's Sovereignty and man's free will.

When truth is revealed to us, there are only two possible reactions to it: It can be received or it can be rejected.

People reject the truth for many reasons:

A. Some People Misunderstood it

Nicodemus thought Jesus was talking about gynecology, when he was actually speaking of the new birth.

-The woman at the well thought Jesus was talking about plumbing, when He was actually talking about Himself being the water of Life.

-The man at the pool of Bethesda thought Jesus was talking about a rescue mission, when He was actually talking about placing faith in Jesus.

-That's why people join the church and are baptized without ever being saved.

B. Some People are Opposed to it

Jesus talked about His Deity, His Death, and His Lordship and they opposed Him at every turn. The cross and the blood and the fact that Jesus is the only way to salvation is offensive to folks today.

C. Some People are Blind to it.

They kept saying to Jesus: "Show us and we will believe." They had already seen Jesus feed 5,000 with a lad's lunch. They knew that Jesus had somehow, miraculously, crossed the lake; yet, they were blind to who He was and what He was doing.

-The sad truth is, all men are spiritually blind to the truth until their eyes are supernaturally opened by the Spirit of God.

D. Some People want the Experience but not the Expectation

They wanted the miracle and sensation of the loaves, but not the commitment to Jesus.

-People today want entertainment and excitement without any commitment to Jesus.

-The churches that are growing the fastest today are those who minimize biblical doctrine and never mention faith and repentance, or the ugliness and destructive power of sin, or preach holiness and commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

-All you need to succeed today as a church is a contemporary band, a message that challenges no one's life, a youth program that is all fun and games, but no Bible study, and messages that will lull you to sleep by a touchy freely religion that is devoid of the truth and demands no change in your life.

II. Not Everyone Can Handle the Trials

Paul talks about a man named Demas who appeared to be a disciple of Christ. In Col. 4:14, Paul commends Demas; in Philemon 24, he calls Demas his fellow – laborer; but in 2 Tim. 4:10, when Paul was in prison and about to die for his faith, Paul says, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Jesus gives us two parables that speaks to those who go away.

A. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

The Lord sows good seed, but Satan comes at night and over sows the same field with tares, which look like wheat when it first starts to grow, but is a poisonous look-alike. Jesus says to let the two grow together until harvest time, then will come a time of separation when the tares will be gathered and burned. In the church there are the real and the false disciples of Christ.

B. The Parable of the Soils

Jesus said that good seed are sown, but some fall on stony ground with not much depth of soil. The seed spring up, but because there is no depth of soil, when the hot sun comes up, it quickly dies.

-Other seed fall among thorns. They quickly spring up, too, but they soon get entangled with the thorns and die.

III. Everyone Will Be Examined by the Lord – John 6:67-69

When the disciples are asked by Jesus if they too will leave Him, Peter answers for the group. He expresses their total commitment and states that they know Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and is the only way to eternal life.

-Peter had made the necessary connection between the words of Jesus and Jesus Himself. To receive Christ is to receive His word. To receive His word is to receive Him! They are always taken together.

-Because Peter had placed his faith in Jesus and in His word, he became the partaker of two great possessions – John 6:69

A. Faith - (“we believe”) An inward conviction that Jesus is who He claims to be.

B. Experience - (“and are sure”) A changed life, a full heart, and a new desire and direction in life.

Peter knew how his life had been changed and this was enough to make him state with confidence that he would not walk away.

-Oh, there came a time of weakness in Peter’s life when he failed the Lord. He did turn his back on the Lord for a time, but he did not walk away forever.

-Once you have felt the powerful touch of Almighty God; Once you have walked in the light of His glory; Once you have tasted of His goodness and experienced His best, you will never be satisfied with substitutes and imitations. You may wander for a time, but you, like the prodigal son, will “come to yourself” and come home and He will receive you with open arms and perfect restoration.

I cannot see into your heart and you cannot see into mine, but God sees us just as we are.

-What does God see when He looks at you? We may deceive each other, but we will never deceive God. He knows where you stand spiritually.

Hebrews 4:13 When the Lord looks at your life, what does He see? Does He see Absolute commitment and faith? He sees you and me just like we are! He sees us in ways that we cannot even see ourselves! Nothing is hidden from His all-seeing gaze!

We come back to the question: “Will you also go away?”

Would you make a total commitment to the Lord and to His will for your life?

Jesus: The Talk of the Town

John 7:1-15, 40-44

When we come to John 7, Jesus is only six months from hanging on the cross.

-In John 7:1 we read, “After these things.” After what things? After the events of John 6. After He fed the 5,000, Jesus declared Himself to be the Bread that came down from Heaven. When He said, “I AM the Bread of Life” the people knew that He was claiming to be God and they were the more determined to kill Him.

-So much so that he had to leave Judea for a time. John 7:1 says that “He would not walk in Jewry (or Judea), because the Jews sought to kill Him.”

Our Lord lived on a Divine timetable. He was on God the Father’s schedule.

-He was born on the Father’s schedule (Gal. 4:4), to the very hour, and He died on the Father’s schedule.

-John 2:4 Jesus said that His hour had not come; that is, it was not time for Him to be subject to man’s will. Four other times in John’s Gospel, Jesus declares that His time had not come – John 7:6,8,30, John 8:20

-As Jesus got closer to the cross, He would announce that HIS HOUR HAD COME –

John 12:23; John 13:1; John 16:32; John 17:1

Hatred for the Lord is growing in John 7. Threats on His Life dominate this chapter. See John 7:1, 12-13, 19, 25, 30, 32, 44

-Notice John 7:43 Jesus continues to divide folks. We’ve all seen it. Maybe we are at a store, in school, at work and we’re talking about any number of things; maybe politics or education or sports or weather; Then someone says something like, “My life has really been different lately because of Christ.” Suddenly, there is a silence and a shuffling of the feet. Someone coughs. Someone else looks at his watch and says, “I’ve got to go or I’ll be late.” Another says, “I’ve got to feed my dog” and he doesn’t even have a dog!

-Jesus is controversial and divisive!

There is a six month gap between the end of John 6 and the beginning of John 7. During those six months Jesus has been in Galilee. We know that because in John 6, Jesus had been in Jerusalem for Passover. He goes to Galilee and, now, six months later He goes back to Jerusalem, and John 7:10 says He goes back to Jerusalem “in secret” (John 7:10) to attend the Feast of Tabernacles.

Let me give you some insights into the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths):

-The Feast took place in Oct. when the harvest had been gathered. It was a joyous feast; a time of celebration, much like our Thanksgiving. It was one of three feasts that every Jewish male was required to attend if he lived within 20 miles of Jerusalem.

-The Feast lasted for eight days. The first and last day of the Feast were treated as Sabbath days, no matter what day of the week it was. Shelters or booths sprang up everywhere – on flat roofs, down dark alleys, even in the courts of the temple.

-They would make their booths out of palm, willow, or myrtle branches and make the walls extra – thin so that light came through and the roof had to show enough sky so the stars could be seen, thus reminding them how their forefathers had wandered in the wilderness and how God had provided for them.

-The Feast was known for two things: Drawing water and lighting lamps.

The drawing of water reminded them of how God gave them water out of the rock. On the first

day of the Feast the people would gather, follow the priest to the Pool of Siloam, chanting Psalms 113-118. The priest carried a golden pitcher, dipped it in the pool and carried it back to the temple. As the priest sounded the blast on the trumpet, they would pour the water on the alter after they had marched around the alter. On the seventh day the priest would march around the alter seven times as they did around the walls of Jericho and then pour the water on the alter.

-At night they would light the lamps, reminding them of the pillar of fire that led them by night.

-In John 7, Jesus used the water experience to declare that He was the Living Water.

In John 8:12, He is going to declare that He is the Light of the world.

Jesus has declared Himself as The Bread of Life and the Living Water. Jesus becomes the Talk of the Town!

-Not all of the talk was complimentary, but He did command their attention!

-Men today think that they'll just ignore Jesus, but that's impossible. He must be reckoned with in this world and in the world to come. You cannot push Jesus aside, because every man will find that at the Judgment Bar, Jesus will be waiting for them.

In John 7, there are at least six different opinions concerning Jesus:

I. Some Disbelieved John 7:3-5

Did you catch that? These are Jesus' half-brothers and half-sisters. According to Matt. 13:55-56, Jesus had at least four brothers and at least two sisters; and they didn't believe on Him until AFTER His resurrection.

-I wonder how that must have made Jesus feel! How His heart must have ached for them!

Think of the spiritual privileges they had! They had grown up around Jesus. They had spent more time with him than any others had. They knew Him better than any others. No doubt Mary had told them the things concerning His birth. They knew much about Him, but they didn't believe on Him.

-How sad that many people who grow up in a Christian home, spend all their lives going to a Bible-believing church, do not believe in Jesus. You would think they would be the first to trust Jesus and to commit to Him.

-Sadly, many who have grown up in church have religion, but no relationship with Jesus. They know about Him, but they do not know him.

Sometimes when one or two children go wrong and do not accept Jesus as their Savior, the parents blame themselves. They feel like they have failed in some way. But not so, for, like our Lord's family members, each person has a free will to accept or reject Christ, no matter what we do.

By the way, Jesus was not surprised at their unbelief, because Ps. 69:8 prophesied that they would not believe on Him.

-Listen to their sarcasm – John 7:3-4. They knew many disciples had walked away from Him. They said, "Leave this red – necked place in Galilee and go to the big city. It's the feast day.

There'll be lots of folks there. Do your tricks there. I'll bet you can get a big following up there! Make a big show of yourself." But Jesus did right the opposite and went in secret –

John 7:6-10.

II. Some Despised John 7:7

-Seven times in this one chapter, we are told that the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus.

-Jesus was aware of what was in the hearts of some people. He knew how some felt toward Him. He knew what some wanted to do to Him. John 7:7

-Why did many people hate Jesus so much? What had He done to bring this kind of reaction?

-What was the basis of this hatred? John 7:7

-Jesus had exposed the world for what it was, evil. He was a light which was shining in darkness and exposing the truth.

-John 3:19-20 People hated Jesus because He exposed their sin. They still do. When Jesus shines His light on a heart and reveals the sin, a reaction will always come. One may repent of that sin or one will resent and resist the light. One will either get right or get

mad.

-Men hate Jesus because Jesus reveals the truth about sin in lives. Sin is still sin and people do not want their sins exposed for what it is, evil.

-Understanding this, one cannot love Jesus and live like the world. It is not possible. He will expose the truth. He will shine His light. He will call evil what it is, evil. And when He does, they will hate Him. There were those who despised Jesus.

-A man once said to a preacher, "I would like to be a Christian, but I run around with a worldly crowd. If I became a Christian, what would I do about them?" The preacher answered, "You wouldn't have to do anything about them. They will either get saved, too, or they will soon desert you if you became a Christian." That's true.

III. Some Discussed John 7:12

-Jesus had made some mighty claims about Himself

- Jn. 5:46...Moses wrote of Me
- Jn. 8:58...Before Abraham was, I AM
- He claimed to have come down from Heaven...He was the Son of God.

-There was an element of people who entered into great discussions regarding Jesus. They wanted to exchange ideas about Him. They wanted to express varying opinions concerning Him.

-One group was of the opinion that "He is a good man." There was another group who said, "He leads the multitude astray." Some were in favor of Him and some were opposed to him.

-The fact was, neither of these were committed to him. They studied him. They discussed Him. They shared ideas about Him. They debated over Him. They never got beyond talk. In reality, they just talked about Him and never walked with Him.

-More people talk about Jesus than walk with Jesus. Some simply discuss Him.

IV. Some Denounced John 7:19-24

-I told you when we were in John 5 and Jesus healed the cripple man on the sabbath, that it was downhill for Jesus. They couldn't let that go.

-Jesus said, "A child is born on the Sabbath...8 days later the law says to circumcise him...you do so. You minister to him in one area; yet, I have healed a man totally and you think I have a devil."

V. Some Dismissed John 7:40-52

-This betrays the people's great ignorance, because Jesus was born in Bethlehem; not Galilee. They didn't even bother to investigate His true birthplace.

-Their ignorance is seen again when they said that no prophet ever came out of Galilee – Both Jonah and Nahum were from Galilee.

-Some folks were talking about a preacher/professor. That said, "Oh, he's so smart. He gets things out of the Bible that aren't even there."

-Look at John 7:47-48 "The real intelligent folks don't believe in Jesus. He only attracts red-necks and dummies."

-The common folk heard him gladly, but even when He was 12 yrs. old in the temple, He confounded the teachers of the Law.

-Look at another testimony John 7:45-46

-Note John 7:14-18 "The Jews" were the master teachers.

VI. Some were Devoted John 7:31, 40-41a

Thank God, many made a commitment of their life to Him.

A group of missionaries went down into deepest Africa. They came to a high hill and looked down on a village where no white man had ever been. They prayed for God's guidance and help and then walked down to the village. The crowds began to gather around them so that they could see these white strangers. One of the missionaries began to talk to them in their native tongue. A little boy came out from the group and stepped up to one of the missionaries.

He took the missionary's hand and looked at it for a long time. Then he said, "Master, can you tell me the name of the river where you washed your hands so clean?" Friends, I can tell you where your sins can be washed away.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

Come to that fountain. Not only will you be washed as white as snow, but your every need will be met and blessings will flow out from you to others.

The Joy of a Flooded Heart

John 7:37-39

Before Reading the passage:

John 7 is centered around the Feast of Tabernacles.

-The Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of the seven Jewish feasts. It lasted for eight days. In preparation for the feast, they would build booths from branches of trees, reminding them of how the Jews lived for 40 years as they were going through the wilderness. It also commemorated God giving them water out of a flint rock in the wilderness.

-There are three movements in John 7 as it related to the Feast of Booths:

- The first part of the chapter deals with the first part of the feast.
- The second part of the chapter deals with what took place in the middle of the feast.
- The third part of the chapter deals with the eighth day or the last day of the feast.

I'm going to deal with John 7:37-39, but I want you to keep in mind what the rest of the chapter deals with

(1) John 7:40-44 Deals with the Growing Indignation against our Lord. John 7: 44 indicates that they had their facts wrong about Jesus; So, their conclusions was also wrong.

(2) John 7:45-52 deals with the Gripping Investigation of Jesus. Notice John 7:45-46 – Jesus spoke and:

- Angry waves were calmed - Blind men were able to see – Water was turned to wine – Dead men came out of the grave.
- Jesus is still speaking today:

- Making Bitter hearts sweet - Hurting hearts well

• Note: Compare John 7:50-52 with John 7:47-49 These know-it-all Pharisees who thought only the stupid folks trusted Jesus showed their own ignorance. There were prophets from Galilee: Jonah, Nahum, Elijah.

• If they had only checked they would have learned that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and He was from the seed of David. (John 7:41-43)

Read the Passage:

Every day of the feast, led by the priest, a train of people went down to the Pool of Siloam, took a golden pitcher and filled the pitcher at the pool. The priest then bore it down the streets amid the shouting and singing of the multitude and the sound of trumpets and cymbals. When the priest reached the temple, he poured out the water by the Golden Altar while all the people sang, "Therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3). After the water was all poured out at the altar, they would all sing the Hallel (Ps. 113-118). This they did for seven days. Then on the eighth day, the last day of the great feast, they would encircle the altar seven times, remembering how the walls of Jericho fell as they blew their horns and shouted! The water poured out was symbolic of the Holy Spirit being poured out on God's people. On the last day they didn't pour the water out, reminding the people that the Promise had not been fulfilled.

It was at this point that Jesus lifted His voice and said, "If any thirst, let him come to Me and drink."

(a) Jesus knew that they were just going through an empty ceremony. Only He could give them lasting joy.

(b) A lot of folks have been saved, but they have very little victory in their lives. They Have Been To Calvary For Pardon, But They Have Not Been To Pentecost For Power. Someone has said that the church is bogged down somewhere between Calvary and Pentecost.

(c) We are much like Lazarus who was raised from the dead...We have life but we still are wrapped in the grave clothes of the old life. We have life but no power. That is why Jesus said, "Loose him and let him go."

I. The Invitation of the Savior John 7:37

-What a claim! Jesus calls Himself the Living Water!

-We are living in a thirsty world – not just thirst for the body, but for the soul.

-Men in our world today thirst for success, power, pleasure...but man's greatest need is to thirst for God and many don't even know it.

● Jer. 2:13 Broken cisterns that leak...they promise fulfillment and satisfaction but they give neither. They substitute pleasure and possessions for God; making those things their god.

- Man's real thirst ought to be for God...Ps. 42:1; Ps. 63:1-4

A. The Recipients

The gospel is universal – whosoever will...That means no one is too bad to be saved...too far gone...too old or too young.

B. The Requirements Thirst...Come...Drink

(1) Thirst

• Thirst is a good thing. If you didn't thirst you would die because your body wouldn't know that it needed to take in some water. Thirsting lets you know you need something that you do not presently have.

- By thirst Jesus means that you recognize your inward need.
- Everyone is not thirsty...Some are blind to their need for God.
- Jesus, the Living Water, is going to say, about 6 months later on the cross, "I thirst..." for He endured an eternity of thirst on the cross for us as He suffered our judgment for our sin on the cross.
- What if we don't receive the Living Water? Luke 16:19-31 (v.24)

(2) Come

- Not everyone who is thirsty comes. Jesus is saying, "Do with your heart what you do with your feet if you go after a drink."
- "Come" is God's Word!
 - . Noah come into the ark.
 - . Isa. 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together..."
 - . Whosoever will may come
 - . Rev. 22:17 The last invitation of the Bible.
- Come to ME – not to the church, baptistry...not for religion but for a Relationship!

(3) Drink

- You can thirst and come and still not drink and it will do you no good.
- You can't just walk up to a water fountain and stand there and look at it and expect your thirst to be satisfied. You must drink!
- You open your mouth (your heart) and receive it into your being.

C. The Result John 7:38

- From your innermost being...God will do the deepest work possible in your life.
- Note: Not River, but Rivers...not just water, but Living Water...life giving water.
- Isa. 12:3; Isa. 55:1-3

II. The Indwelling of the Spirit John 7:39

-At Salvation the Holy Spirit comes into your heart.

-Rom. 8:9

-John 14:16-17 He is In you everywhere you go!

He not only wants to indwell you; He also wants to fill you...to be in control of your life.

III. The Influence of the Saints John 7:38

-Your life becomes a channel of blessings.

-There is to be a Flowing In ...a Filling up...Flooding out!

Is your life a channel of blessing? Is the love of God flowing through you? Are you telling the lost of the Savior? Are you ready His service to do?

Is your life a channel of blessing? Is it daily telling for Him? Have you spoken the word of salvation to those who are dying in sin?

We cannot be a channel of blessing if our lives are not free from known sin; we will barriers be and a hindrance to those we are trying to win.

Make me a channel of blessing today, make me a channel of blessing I pray; my life possessing, my service blessing, make me a channel of blessing today.

What's flowing out of your life? Some are like an open sewer; nothing but filth comes from their lips and life.

-Others are like a spiritual artesian well, running over with kindness, encouragement, love for others.

In the early 1900's there was a close-knit community in the south. They had one general country store, one school where all the children went to school, one church house where the Baptists and Methodists would take turns meeting in ...the Baptists one week and the Methodists the next week. Across from the church house was the community well with the dipper hanging on the side of the well which everyone took turns using...the children at the school, the church folks, the farmers who came to get their goods at the general store.

There was a beloved, respected man in the community that everyone called Uncle Billy. Uncle Billy had been in a sawmill accident and had lost his left hand at the sawmill. Uncle Billy was the unofficial announcement maker at both the Baptist and the Methodist services.

If anyone had an announcement, they told Uncle Billy and he shared it with the congregation.

It happened that for some reason the folks of the community started getting sick. The doctor of the community thought that it would be wise if folks stopped using the same dipper at the well. It was almost time for the church service to begin. Instead of telling Uncle Billy to ask the folks not to all drink from the same dipper, he told the pastor.

That Sunday they were to observe the Lord's Supper. The pastor thought, "Well, it won't hurt if, just this once, I make the announcement about the use of the dipper instead of Uncle Billy. The pastor made the announcement and said, "The reason you shouldn't all drink from the same dipper is that you might catch what the sick of our community has."

Folks began to look at Uncle Billy to see what his response would be to not being asked to make the announcement. He stood, went to the front where the Lord's Supper table was and with his good hand and his nub, lifted the cloth off the juice trays. Then he picked up a little glass juice cup, held it for a moment, showed the cup to the congregation and said, "We dare not all drink of the water dipper lest we catch what others have. But as we drink of this cup of our Lord, may we all catch what Jesus has."

Oh, that we should all catch what Jesus has! His spirit...His character.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink ...and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Are you thirsty for Jesus? Really thirsty? Come and Drink!

Jesus: The Light of the World

John 8:12

One of the greatest legal battles was once fought over a terrible automobile accident that involved a train at Blue Mountain. Not Blue Mountain, Ms., but Blue Mountain Palmerton, PA. The accident happened on a dark rainy night as a fast moving car came down the mountain road, around a sharp curve, and ran head long into the train. Several people were killed in the accident.

In the fiery contested court battle the railroad flagman told precisely how he got off the train before it reached the railroad crossing and stood in the highway swinging his lantern back and forth to signal any approaching vehicle. This was his customary behavior whenever the train approached this notoriously bad intersection. On this particular night he had done precisely as he had been instructed, and as he had on many previous occasions.

Under determined cross-examination he consistently answered each question as to his procedures that particular night. Yes, he got off the train ahead of the crossing. Yes, he stood in the highway. Yes, he swung his lantern back and forth in a cross manner. He even jumped out of the way of the speeding automobile before it hit the train. The jury deliberated, and the railroad won because of the testimony of this flagman.

About a year later the flagman who had now retired from the railroad was fishing on one of the beautiful lakes. The attorney who had represented the families saw him and asked how the fishing was. The attorney said, "You were a witness at a railroad accident last year. You know, that was the best-fought trial I have ever had. I should have won that case. You were the best witness I have ever cross-examined. You were great. I lost that case because of your splendid performance. You were a determined and a perfect witness."

The humble flagman squirmed a little and said, "Oh, man was I scared that day. I have never ever been so frightened in all my life."

The lawyer replied, "No one would have ever known it. You were great the way you handled me."

"Oh, I was scared," the man said. "I was so scared you were going to ask that question."

"What question?" inquired the attorney.

"You know," the man replied. "I was scared you were going to ask, 'Did you have your lantern lit that night?'"

How many people go through this spiritually dark world without their lantern lit? Do you have the light of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling within you? Is your lantern lit? Is it brightly trimmed?

You know that John is writing his Gospel to declare that Jesus is God come in the Flesh; the Christ; and the Messiah.

-As he writes he has a plan in mind. He not only declares that Jesus is God come in the flesh and that he is the Christ; the Messiah, he also declares that Jesus is the "Great I AM!"

-Although Jesus was not "God in Flesh" in the O.T., He was still active in the affairs of His people in the O.T.

-John uses the Feast of Tabernacle and the O.T. events it represents to show that the events were really types of Christ.

- In John 6, Jesus transforms a lad's lunch of loaves and fishes to teach that Moses was only the human agent who gave His people manna from Heaven. Jesus said that it was His Father who gave them bread from Heaven and not Moses and that He, Jesus, is the True Bread from Heaven.

- In John 7, the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated Moses giving them water out of the rock

of flint, but Jesus stood and said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink...out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

- In John 8, John would emphasis one other aspect of the Feast of Tabernacles. The glory cloud was given by God to lead and protect Israel during her forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Jesus would stand and say, "I Am the Light of the world."

With that in mind, I want us to look at Jesus: The Light of the World!

I. Our Lord's Declaration –John 8:12a

The first created act of God was the creation of "light". (Gen. 1:3) Yet, this was not the first form of light, for the Bible says that "God is Light." (1 John 1:5). Before physical light was created, supernatural light already existed; therefore, the spiritual is greater than the physical.

Light is often used as a description of God or what extends from Him to us.

1.Psalm 27:1 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2.Psalm 89:15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

3.Psalm 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

4.Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

When Jesus said, "I Am the Light of the World," He was claiming to be God; to be the Messiah; to be the Christ!

Why is He called Light?

- To the darkness of falsehood, He is the Light of Truth.
- To the darkness of ignorance, He is the Light of Wisdom.
- To the darkness of impurity, He is the Light of Holiness.
- To the darkness of sorrow, He is the Light of Joy.
- To the darkness of death, He is the Light of Life.

At the Feast of Tabernacles, just as the sun started to go down, they would light the two great candelabra in the in the Temple court. Each candelabra had seven prongs. When they were lighted, the golden roof of the Temple took up the reflection and cast the light around in every direction.

-The light spoke of the Pillow of Cloud by day and the Pillow of Fire by night that lead them through the wilderness. It spoke of the Shekinah glory of God and his Presence with them.

Why was the cloud or pillow of fire so important to Israel?

1.Ex. 13:17-18, EX. 21-22;

Exo 13:17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

Exo 13:18 But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

Exo 13:2 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

Exo 13:22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

-The light was to be their guide; their direction giver. It was a sign of God's holy presence with them.

-The Lord Jesus – the light of the world – wants to be our guide; to point the way for us with His very presence.

-Num. 9:15-18

Num 9:15 And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.

Num 9:16 So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

Num 9:17 And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.

Num 9:18 At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents.

-The cloud told them when to move and when to stop.

2.Ex. 14:19-20, 24-25

Exo 14:19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

Exo 14:20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

Exo 14:24 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,

Exo 14:25 And took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

-The cloud protected God's people from their enemies. When Pharaoh and the Egyptians came after the people of God, He protected them.

3.The cloud also became a shield to God's people. It would shield them from the hot desert sun by day and the near freezing temperatures at night.

-Since the fire by night gave Israel light, they never experienced complete darkness the whole 40 years they wandered.

-This fire was supernatural; not just ordinary fire, and the Israelites certainly understood that. No natural fire could have continued for 40 years above the Ark of the Covenant. God Himself sustained the fire which never went out.

Of course, our greatest need for the Light is to dispel the darkness. We live in a dark world. Man is walking in darkness without Christ.

What kind of Darkness?

1.Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

-Satan and sin have brought darkness into this world.

2.2Co 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Eph 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Eph 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Eph 4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

-This is mental blindness. Satan blinds men to God's truth.

3.1Jo 2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

-This is moral darkness with no real insight to right and wrong.

4.Spiritual Darkness

-Everyone apart from Jesus is in spiritual darkness and without salvation.

-Helen Keller, who was blind and deaf from birth, said, "I feel sorry for folks who have eyes and still cannot see."

When Jesus said, "I Am the Light of the World," He uses the Greek term "ego eimi", meaning "I and I alone; I and no other."

-Jesus and Jesus alone is all the light we need to bring us into God's holy presence.

Open my eyes, that I may see, Glimpses of truth thou hast for me.

Place in my hands the wonderful Key, that shall unclasp and set me free:

Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready my God, Thy will to see

Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit Divine!

II. Our Lord's Demand – John 8:12b

There is no need for anyone to walk through life in spiritual darkness, Christ is the light of the world and he will shine in our hearts if we let Him in!

A woman named Rose Crawford had been blind for 50 years. "I just can't believe it!" she gasped as the doctor lifted the bandages from her eyes after her recovery from delicate surgery in an Ontario hospital. She wept for joy, when, for the first time in her life, a dazzling and beautiful world of form and color greeted eyes that now were able to see. The amazing thing about the story, however, is that 20

years of her blindness had been unnecessary. She didn't know that surgical techniques had been developed, and that an operation could have restored her vision at the age of 30. The doctor said, "She just figured there was nothing that could be done about her condition. Much of her life could have been different."

As I read the news account of her case, some questions came to mind. Why did she continue to assume that her situation was hopeless? Had no one told her about the wonderful advances in eye surgery? Then I thought of the plight of those unreached by the Gospel. How many will go on living in moral blindness unless we bring them to the Savior? Millions will never know anything but spiritual darkness because no one has shared with them the Light that has come into the world.

What does it mean to "follow" Christ? In the Greek it implies several things:

1. The word is used for a soldier who follows his captain. You follow with no questions asked. You simply obey.
2. The word is used of a slave who attends to his master's needs. We are to be at our Lord's beckoning call and to do it with joy. We are to serve him!
3. The word means to follow the advice of a wise counselor.
4. It means to obey the laws or standards that are set up. It is all a question of obedience.

We should never attempt to alter or bend the light our Lord gives us. To do so would only mean disaster.

The captain of the ship looked into the dark night and saw faint light in the distance. Immediately he told his signalman to send a message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south." Promptly a return message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north."

The captain was angered; his command had been ignored. So, he sent a second message: "Alter your course 10 degrees south – I am the captain!" Soon another message was received: "Alter your course 10 degrees north – I am a seaman third class Jones."

Immediately the captain sent a third message, knowing the fear it would evoke: "Alter your course 10 degrees south – I am a battleship." Then the reply came: "Alter your course 10 degrees north – I am a lighthouse."

In the midst of our dark and foggy times, all sorts of voices are shouting orders into the night, telling us what to do, how to adjust our lives. Out of the darkness, one voice signals something quite opposite to the rest – something almost absurd. But the voice happens to be the Light of the World, and we ignore it at our peril.

III. Our Lord's Deliverance – John 8:12c

If folks know Jesus is the Light, why don't they follow Him?

Joh 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Jesus calls for a decision. What will you do with the Light?

- Someone has said, "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark: the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."
- To reject Jesus is to live in constant darkness.

What happens if you don't come to Jesus who is the light?

Joh 8:21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

Joh 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

Life's Greatest Tragedy John 8:21,24

I want to preach today on Life's Greatest Tragedy, but before I read the scripture, I want to ask you a question that I've asked folks throughout this past week. Here's the question: "What is the worst thing that could happen to you?"

1. One person said, "The worst thing that could happen to me is for my wife to leave me." That would be bad indeed, but that would not be the worst thing that could happen to you.
2. Another said, "If something were to happen to one of my children..." How sad that would be, but that is not the worst thing that could happen to you.
3. Another said, "For me to find out that I am terminally ill and could not get well..." But that is not the worst thing.

4. Another said, "To lose all my possessions: my house, my investments" But that would not be the worst thing.

Well, what is it then? What is life's greatest tragedy?

Read John 8:21, 24 (To die in your sins)

Why do folks die in their sins? Jesus mentions several reasons as we shall see in the rest of this chapter, but Jesus mentions two major reasons: we must face the sin question and Son question.

A. The Sin Question

The first way to guarantee that you will die in your sins and not go to the Father's house, not go to Heaven, is to be convinced that you don't need to be saved. Just to be convinced that you are alright and that you have no need of a Savior.

-Far and away the most difficult people to reach are those who don't think there is a need for them to be saved. They think they are all right, just as they are.

-Another way of saying it is, they are self-righteous.

Nobody ever comes to Christ who doesn't see himself as a sinner who needs his sin taken away.

-Billy Graham has said all through his ministry that he believes that 60 to 70 percent of church members are lost. Folks who have grown up in church and have been a part of the church all their life; and yet, have never really been saved.

-They can talk about how good God is and how great God is, but they cannot talk about a personal relationship with Jesus; a time when they personally realized they were a sinner because of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and when they asked Jesus to forgive them of their sins and to come into their heart under total commitment to Jesus.

B. The Son Question – John 8:24

A Second way to guarantee that you will die in your sins is to be unbelieving. Just don't believe. Just do not believe the gospel. Reject the gospel.

"Well, what am I supposed to believe?"

- "If you do not believe that I am He; that I am the one I claim to be." To believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be, God in human flesh, the Savior who died for your sin and rose again. The gospel-You can go to Hell for just not believing that!

You don't have to go out and kill somebody to go to Hell. You don't have to be bad. Just don't believe. That's what Jesus is saying!

-Hell is not for people who are all criminals; not just for bad guys. Hell is for anybody and everybody who refuses Christ.

-Satan's big lie is that you don't need Jesus as your personal Savior.

Why is dying in your sin life's greatest tragedy? Because if you die in your sin:

I. Your Decision is Finalized – Matt. 10:32-33; Rev. 21:8,27

I think of those who made the WRONG decision and choice concerning Jesus and died in their sins:

Matt. 19:16-22 The Rich Young Ruler

Notice: "What good thing shall I DO that I may have eternal life?" You can't be saved by following rules or routines or some system.

-What a tragedy! He was so close to salvation; yet, turned away. What a foolish decision – trading one's soul for this world's goods and not making his commitment to Jesus!

Acts 24:24-25 This records Paul's defense before Felix, the governor of Judea. Paul was accused of causing a "plague" of dissension among all the Jews and of being the ringleader of the sect of "The way" and for preaching that there would be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. Paul came before Felix and as he preached to him, the Holy Spirit so convicted his heart that he "trembled."

-Two other times before this account in the Book of Acts we are told that men trembled.

In Acts 9:6, when God's great light knocked Saul, who was to become Paul, to the ground and said, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Paul answered, "Who are you, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I AM Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads. So he, TREMBLING said, "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

Acts 16:29 Paul and Silas were in a Philippian jail, singing songs at midnight. Suddenly an earthquake shook the foundations of the prison and all the stocks fell from the hands and feet of the prisoners. The jailer came in TREMBLING and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Both the Philippian jailer and Saul trembled and were saved; but not Felix.

But Felix trembled and said, "When I have a more convenient time, I will call for you." We have no record that he ever did.

-Two sworn enemies of your soul are yesterday and tomorrow.

-Some folks look at their past and think, "I'm too sinful; God can't or won't forgive me."

Sometimes folks think: "I'm too bad to be saved" or "I'm too good, I don't need to be saved" or "I'm too young to be saved" or "I'm too old to be saved" or "I'm not ready. When I get ready, I'll get saved."

But where yesterday has slain her thousands, tomorrow has slain her ten thousand, until they die in their sins and hear Jesus say, "Too late! Too late!"

(3.) Acts 26:27-28 Paul comes before King Agrippa. Again, he talks about the resurrection of the dead when both the just and the unjust will stand before the Lord. This time Paul even shares his personal testimony of when he got saved. Then he said, "Do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe what they said." Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost you persuade me to become a Christian."

Almost persuaded, now to believe; Almost persuaded, Christ to receive;
Seems now some soul to say, "Go Spirit, go Thy way
Some more convenient day, on Thee I'll call."

Almost persuaded, come, come today, Almost persuaded, turn not away
Jesus invites you here, Angels are lingering near,
Prayers rise from hearts so dear; O wanderer, come!

Almost cannot avail; Almost is but to fail! Sad, Sad
that bitter wail. Almost, but lost.

A young college student was attending a BSU Revival on his college campus. God spoke to his heart, but the young man said, "No." Again, the Holy Spirit spoke to him. He was stirred morning, noon, and night during the whole week. Finally, he said, "God, you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone." He said that God never spoke to his heart again. What a tragedy to die in your sins!

-Tell of a lady who asked Junior Hill to go talk to her son. He went; told him who he was; invited him to revival. The 35 yr. Old son replied, "I've got a ___ ___ car and I know where the ___ ___ church is and I don't need some ___preacher to talk to me about Jesus." That night at church the lady asked, "Did you talk to my boy?" Junior told her what happened...she told him this story: "When he was 9 yrs. Old, we went to a revival meeting. At the invitation he said, "Mother, can I go down and trust Jesus?" She said, "No, you are too young." Again he said, "Mother, please let me go..." She said, "No." A third time he said, "Mother, I know Jesus wants me to go to Him." She said, "No." The Mother said, "Bro. Hill, that is the last time my son has ever wanted to go to Jesus. I live knowing that I stopped my son from trusting Jesus."

-I see parents with children whose hearts are tender, carrying them everywhere on Sunday except to church (ball games, lake, ect) and it never crossed their minds that they are hindering their own child from being saved. Instead of pointing them To Jesus, they are pointing them Away From Jesus.

II. Your Deliverance is Forfeited

Heb.9:27 That's why it is so important to come to Jesus early.

Dr. Jack Hayles, pastor of the largest Independent Baptist Church, picked up his little grandchild for the first time. Someone overheard him saying to the child, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God...The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD ...For God so loved the world...but have everlasting life...whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved." Someone said, "You don't think that baby understands you, do you?" He said, "No, but I want him to get use to hearing the gospel while he is young."

What a contrast to many parents today. I heard about a dad who never went to church. Mom always went. When the child got to be 5 or 6, he got in his dad's lap one Sunday when the mom was trying to get him to go with her to Sunday School and the child said, "We don't want to be an old Christian, do we dad?"

III. Your Destiny is Fixed

Dr. Mariece Rollins wrote a book entitled "Beyond Death's Door." Dr. Rollins is a cardiologist, who for a long time, did not believe in God. One day while giving a man a stress test, the man fell to the floor and his heart stopped beating. Dr. Rollins worked with the man's heart and revived him. As he was coming to, the man kept saying, "Get me out...get me out...get me out." "Out of where?" "I was about to be cast into hell." He said that in his years as a cardiologist, he had revived folks who described both heaven and hell.

If we didn't have Dr. Rollin's book to tell us about life beyond, we have a better book – the Bible!

The Bible says hell is a place of:

A. Suffering

- Luke 16:24 "I am tormented in this flame"
- Matt. 22:13 "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

B. Separation

- Luke 16:26 "There is a great gulf fixed"

C. Sadness

- Those in hell will remember every opportunity to trust Jesus
- If folks could spend 5 min. looking into hell, they would repent

Bob Herrington: How far off is heaven/hell? Just one heartbeat.

Like Father, Like Son John 8:31-59

This passage is about Fathers and Sons. In our text, the word "father" is used over a dozen times.

-As you study the passage, you will find that the word "father" may refer to one of three fathers. Sometimes the reference could refer to Abraham, the father of the faithful (8:38). When Jesus speaks to these religious folks, He tells them that they are of their father, the devil (8:44). Jesus then speaks of His Father, God the Father.

Look at the relationship between God the Son and God the Father.

- In John 8:29 Jesus said, "I always do those things that please my Father."
- In John 8:49 Jesus said, "I honor my Father."

It's a haunting thing to disappoint your earthly father.

-I was watching the Andy Griffith Show and Andy "thought" Opie had been selfish for not giving to a children's home. The real reason Opie couldn't give to the home was because he had spent all his money on a coat for a little girl who didn't have a coat, but Andy didn't know that. When Opie told Andy he couldn't give, Andy said, "O.K., but I want you to know I'm disappointed in you." Little Opie's face looked like he had been kicked in the gut. He was broken hearted because his dad was disappointed in him.

-My dad never told me that he was disappointed in me, but there were a few times that I could tell by the look on his face that he was disappointed with me.

-Let me tell you something more serious. It is displeasing our Heavenly Father. Every day you and I displease our Heavenly Father. We displease Him with our sins, our disobedience, our indifference, worldliness. I wish it were not so. I wish that I never did or said or thought anything which displeased God. I wish it could be said of me and you that we did only those things that pleased Him. But we are sinful human beings. If God were not a God of grace and forgiveness and mercy, there would be no hope for any of us.

In this passage like no other, Jesus cuts through all the veneer and gets down to the real heart of the matter concerning real, genuine salvation.

-These religious folks who confronted Jesus thought they were saved and going to heaven, but in some hard-hitting teaching Jesus show them who their real father was.

A. They thought they were saved because of their heritage – John 8:33,37,39-41,44

Now let me straighten this out for you. In John 8:37a, Jesus said that it was true that they were the physical descendants of Abraham and a part of the covenant people, but just because that is true doesn't make them children of God.

-The Jews were proud of their heritage as descendants of Abraham. They were convinced that their eternal destiny was determined by being Abraham's descendants.

-Here is what stung the Jews: Jesus said that a Jew belonging to the family of Abraham could at the same time be a child of the devil.

-Remember that Abraham had taken to himself the slave girl Hager and she had borne Ishmael. He was indisputably the seed of Abraham, but he was not the Son of promise.

Issac was.

- Romans 2:28-29
- Romans 9:6-8
- Romans 4:11 Abraham was the father of all those who believed.

Church folks today have something in common with the Jews in Jesus' day.

-Folks in the church today, especially in the "Bible Belt," are proud of their heritage. ASK them if they are going to heaven and they will tell you that their grandpa was a preacher; their uncle started the church; their mother was the grand potentate of the WMU; they are

faithful members who tithe, but they themselves have never had a personal experience with the Lord Jesus. They are living on second and third handed faith and that is tragic.

-Can there be anything worse than to think you have served Christ throughout your life and then hear Jesus say, as He does in Matt. 7:23 - "I never knew you: depart from me you that work iniquity."

B. They thought they were saved but they manifested the works of the devil – John 8:37-41,44

Mark three words in John 8:44 – lust, murderer, liar

Lust or desire: Satan's desire was to dethrone God in his life. He put his desires before God's desires. He sought his own desires and pleasures before God's.

A murderer from the beginning: Satan was not merely trying to deceive Eve or to promote rebellion against God in Gen.3, though he was attempting these things. Satan's role in the fall was nothing less than premeditated murder. Satan knew if he could get Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden tree, it would result in their death and that death would fall on all their descendants.

Satan is a liar by nature: You've heard me say that you are never more like the devil than when you lie, for Satan is the father of lies. Lying is his very nature.

C.

Jesus, on the other hand, always does what pleases His Father; He is life and gives life; He is Truth.

-You can tell who your father is by looking at your works.

-Jesus told the Jews that they could not be the children of God and want to kill Him who is Truth.

C. Real, genuine, saving faith is more than one's Profession; It is also one's Practice; it is more than Belief; it is Behavior – John 8:31-32, 34-36

True belief will stand the test of time.

-Some are stirred emotionally by a touching story or a forceful preacher. They respond readily to an invitation. They "feel so good." For several weeks or months, they discontinue certain sinful practices. But it's not long before they go back to their old ways and feel as they always did.

-Sometime we try to help them out or justify the way they are living by saying, "Oh, they are just backslidden," because we don't want to admit that they were not really saved.

-A man who was a drunk supposedly got saved at one of D.L Moody's meetings.

A few weeks later Moody and one of the men from the church was walking down the street. They looked toward a side street and there was that man with a bottle to his mouth. The man who was with Moody said, "Mr. Moody, isn't that one of your converts?" Moody responded, "He must be one of MY CONVERTS. It's quite evident he's not one of the Lord's converts."

● I John 2:4

● Good works are not the condition for receiving eternal life; but they are the evidence that the faith exercised is genuine faith.

Faith without works is dead. Faith opens the door; but works is the evidence that the Holy Spirit has entered to transform the man's character.

-Faith brings the light to one's soul; continuing faith brings devotion to Christ that breaks the power of indwelling sin and sets free the one who is enslaved to sin.

-I John 3:5-10

There are children of God and children of the devil.

-The children of God have an abiding faith in Jesus Christ and have lives that are marked by obedience to Christ. They are striving to purify themselves even as Jesus Himself is pure.

-There are children of the devil. Some have deceived themselves into thinking that they actually belong to God. But their hope is not in Christ. It is in something else. Often, their heritage or their own work to be self-righteous. Their faith does not hold up when tested and they are not characterized by obedience to Christ. They may appear to be good people, but when push comes to shove, they chose their own way instead of God's.

Whose child are you?

"O, What A Savior!"

Selected Passages from John

There is no one like Jesus!

What I want to do for a few minutes is to just brag on Jesus! I say again: There is no one like Jesus!

- Song of Solomon 5:16- "He is altogether lovely".

Jesus is complete beauty. Nothing is lacking in Him!

- Song of Solomon 5:10 - "He is the chief among ten thousand".

"He is the best of the best."

- Col. 3:11 Christ is all and in all.

Because Jesus Christ is the Savior of all believers, He is equally the all – sufficient Lord of them all.

- I Peter 2:7 "To you who believe (in Him), He is precious".

-To those who have personally trusted Him as Savior and Lord of their life, in their estimation, no one is esteemed or honored or respected or revered more than Jesus Christ!

-That is not the view of the world. The world doesn't honor Him at all. In fact, they want to get rid of Him.

-But for the saint, the child of God, He is our best friend, we want to obey and serve Him completely. We would be willing to die for Him.

-Why? Because no one else could do for us what He has done for us. We owe all of our hopes of heaven to Him. We have no hope of salvation but in Him!

- Phil. 2:9-11 "Jesus is the sweetest name I know, And He's just the same as His lovely Name, And that's the reason why I love Him so; Oh, Jesus is the sweetest name I know."

Jesus is our all in all. Someone put it like this:

To the Architect, He is the Chief Cornerstone.

To the Artist, He is altogether Lovely.

To the Astronomer, He is the Light of the world.

To the Baker, He is the Living Bread.

To the Banker, He is the Hidden Treasure.

To the Biologist, He is the Life.

To the Builder, He is the Sure Foundation.

To the Carpenter, He is the Door.

To the Doctor, He is the Great Physician.

To the Farmer, He is the Lord of the Harvest.

To the Florist, He is the Rose of Sharon

To the Geologist, He is the Rock of Ages.

To the Lawyer, He is the Advocate.

To the Philosopher, He is the Wisdom of God.

To the Sculptor, He is the Living Stone.

To the Theologian, He is the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

To the Traveler, He is the New and Living way.

To the Sinner, He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

To the Saint, He is our Blessed Assurance.

Folks have tried in vain to adequately describe the Lord Jesus, but no human language can describe Him.

Though I could never adequately describe Him, I want to share four things about our Lord:

I. Our Lord's Claims

Jesus claims to be God come in the flesh. Over and over He claims to be the Great I Am of Exodus 3. Moses stands at the burning bush and hears God tell him to lead the people of God out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

-In the Gospel of John, Jesus amplifies His name when He says, "I am the Bread of Life, I am the Light of the world, I am the Door, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Notice John 8:29, 46, 49

II. Our Lord's Character

I could preach for years on this one point, but I want to share just one verse with you: Hebrews 7:26

A. In His relationship to God the Father, Christ is "Holy".

Not just outwardly, but pure in heart. He is perfectly righteous. He has a personal holiness and is absolutely perfect; Holy. No sin dwells in Him. He is without any pollution.

B. In His relationship to man, He is "Harmless."

He never injured anyone. He never did anything wrong to any one; not to their name, their person, or their property, and He never will.
-He is the only person who has lived on earth of whom it can be said that he never, in any way, did wrong to another.

C. In relationship to Himself, He is "undefiled".

He is free from all contamination. He never had any improper desire or passion.
-Though He took upon Him the guilt of our sins, He never involved Himself in any wrong.

D. He was separate from sinners

Though He took a true human form, in a miraculous way, He had no sin nature which would be the source of any act of sin.

-He did not partake in man's plans, pleasures, principles, or views of a sinful world.
-O, What a Savior!

III. Our Lord's Charm

Let me use just one example out of the multitude of examples that I could use.

In the Song of Solomon 2:1, we read: "I AM the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys."

The son of the Highest calls Himself "the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys" to express His presence with His people in this world AND the easiness of their access to Him, And the beauty and sweetness which they find in Him.

Let me begin with the second phrase first: "the lily of the valleys"

-Did you notice that the word "valleys" is plural? Valleys are low places; hard places; testing places.

-To those who are in the valleys, He is a lily.

-Lilies are often surrounded by thorns. The wicked of this world have no love for Christ and are as thorns, worthless, useless, noxious, and hurtful. God's people are lilies among them, scratched, torn; exposed to hardships and troubles.

-Yet, Jesus is a lily in the valleys. The lily stands for two things: whiteness and sweetness. To those in the valleys, He is the lily. He keeps His people white or clean and He also keeps them sweet in the midst of valleys.

-But notice that the church, the people of God, are to be AS a lily. The beauty of Christ is to be seen in His people. They are to resemble the Lord Jesus. They are to be AS lilies, for they are made like Christ. In their hearts, the love of Christ has been shed abroad.

Not only is Christ the lily of the Valley, He is also the rose of Sharon.

-Why a rose? Because it is the chief or king of flowers. Nothing can compare to the rose.

Roses were used in that day in three ways that we no longer practice today, but those three practices give us the spiritual meaning. Remember that Jesus is the rose of Sharon. In that day, roses were used for:

A. Washing or Bathing

In that day a traveler might request a Rose Bath. Many roses would be put in a tub for bathing. Some of the roses would be crushed and others left whole. All would be stirred in the water. The properties of the rose would give a soothing feeling and the longer one stayed in the bath, the more the fragrance of the rose would penetrate into the pores of the skin.

-After the bath the person would walk down the street and no one had to ask where they had been. They carried the influence of the rose fragrance with them everywhere they went.

-The closer you and I get to the Rose of Sharon and the longer we stay close to Him, the more the folks around us ought to know it.

-Our mates ought to sense the fragrance of the Lord in our lives. Our children, the folks we work with, folks all around us ought to be able to tell that we have been with Jesus.

B. Medicine

Folks would extract the nectar from the roses and mix it with water. They would drink it as a cleansing agent; not for the outside, but for the inside.

-Religion works to clean up the outside; that which you can see; but Jesus cleans up the inside.

-To really clean up the outside, you must first clean the inside. Isn't that what Jesus does?

C. Refreshing

The nectar could also be mixed with other things and when ingested, it would energize the person. It would put a pep in their step. Most of us need that from the Lord.

IV. Our Lord's Compassion

The most important thing that Jesus came to do for us is the one thing we cannot do for ourselves.

-"He came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Jesus is altogether lovely. To them who believe on Him, He is precious.

Do you know Him? Is He real to you?

I Once Was Blind, But Now I See

John 9:1-12

If there had been a daily newspaper in Jerusalem in the day of Jesus, I wonder how the headlines would have read as Jesus performed His miracles.

1. Man Turns Water into Wine
2. Young Rabbi Heals Royal Official's Son at A Distance
3. Man Walks on Water and Calms A Storm
4. Young Miracle-Worker Feeds 5,000 With Lad's Lunch
5. Lame Man Walks Again

There were no newspapers in His day, but, no doubt, Jesus was the talk of the town.

When we come to John 9, we see that Jesus heals a man who was born blind.

-It is interesting that, of all the healing miracles that Jesus performed, this is the only Congenital Disease recorded that Jesus healed. That is, this is the only person that we know of who was "born" with a disease that Jesus healed. All of the rest of those He healed contacted their disease in childhood or in adulthood.

-John must have done some research on the subject, because he says in John 9:32 that "since the world began" there was no record of anyone born blind ever being healed; at least in his day. There have been cases in our day of modern medicine, but none in his day.

Could I point out that of the 33 recorded miracles that Jesus performed, 18 were requested and 15 were initiated on His own.

-What that means is that it was because of our Lord's compassion and love and mercy and grace that the blind man received his sight. This man was blind. Jesus could have walked right passed him and he would never have known it. Jesus could have withheld His healing power and the man would never had known it. But Jesus stopped and met this man's need. He does the same with us!

Of all the handicaps that can curse men and women, blindness must be one of the saddest. Blind from his birth, this man never saw the glory of a sunrise or the elegance of a sunset. He never saw the green of the trees and grass or the blue of the sky. He never saw the snow-cap mountains. He never saw the wonders of animals or the birds flying in the sky. He never saw the face of his mother or dad or the smile of a happy child. He lived his entire life in a state of total darkness.

-But there is something far worse than physical blindness, and that is spiritual blindness. The truth is that every person who is born, is born spiritually blind. Every one of us need a divine operation, performed by the Great Physician, so that we can see, and see clearly spiritually.

The Bible often speaks of those apart from Jesus as being spiritually blind.....2 Cor.4:4;

John 3:3; Eph. 4:17-19

-There is a great Parallel between the physical blind and the spirituality blind.

I. The Condition of the Man – John 9:1

To those with sight, a blind person stands out, though the blind person sees no one.

-Sometimes the clothes worn by blind people identifies them as a blind person. That was especially true during Jesus' day. You will remember that Blind Bartimaeus removed his coat when he received his sight. That coat may have marked him as a blind man.

-Today, special dark glasses may mark one as a blind person, or a specially marked cane or a seeing eye dog. If you looked into the eyes of a blind person, his eyes would indicate that he was blind.

As an application of this truth, a Christian notes recognizable features when he sees one who is spiritually blind.

-The lost person does not see on a spiritual plane. They hate the Christ of the Scriptures. In their darkened state, they abhor the mention of Jesus in public prayers; they tear down the manger scenes and try to get prayer removed from schools. The ACLU is made up of Pharisaical folks like those in Jesus' day. Until their spiritual eyes are opened, they will still refuse to believe.

-Only Jesus can give spiritual sight.

II. The Confusion About the Man – John 9:2-3

Do you believe these disciples? Instead of seeing this man in PITY, they saw him as a PUZZLE!

-They stand over this man and have a theological debate as to the cause of his blindness! "Lord, did he sin or did his parents sin? Who's at fault? Why was he born blind? Obviously, God is punishing him for some sin. What was it and who is at fault?"

Is that the way you look at someone who is suffering or someone who has experienced some crisis or someone who has experienced some tragic loss?

- "I wonder what great sin they have committed that would cause God to do that to them?" You just assume that God is punishing them for some sin.

Their question reflects the idea commonly held then, as now, that illness is connected to sin.

-The Book of Job should have already answered that false idea, but it persists even today. Sickness may be caused by some specific sin, but not necessarily so.

The disciples saw three possibilities as to why people suffer:

A. Prenatal Sin

Many Jews believed that it was possible for an infant to sin before it was born. The example they often cited was of Jacob who took hold of his brother, Esau's heel in the womb.

-Does it seem silly to you that a baby could sin in its mother's womb? It does to me.

-The Bible says we are born with a sin nature, but we didn't commit some sin in the womb. How are we tempted in the womb?

B. Parental Sin

Children are not punished for the sins of the parents. Children may suffer the consequences of the Parent's sins. The mother may have been a drug addict or have AIDS or some other disease that can be passed on to the child.

C. Personal Sin

After healing the paralytic man in John 5:14, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.

-In John 9:3, Jesus didn't mean that the blind man never sinned, or that his parents never sinned. He was saying that THIS blindness was not the result of their sin.

If you read John 9:3-4 in the KJV, it sounds like Jesus is saying that the reason the man was born blind was so God's work of healing might be worked upon him.

-That poses a problem. Did God permit this man to be born blind solely for the purpose that on this occasion He might get glory out of His healing?

-Did God will that this man should walk in physical darkness all these years for the purpose of healing him at this time? Such a position is contrary to the very nature of God.

The Problem is a matter of punctuation. Originally the Greek text had no punctuation except question marks. So, other than question marks, the punctuation as we have it is not inspired. This was added later. The one adding it did so according to his own interpretation of the meaning. We are justified in using our own where it does not contradict the overall teaching of the Bible. Men like G. Campbell Morgan, J. Vernon McGee, and Hershel Hobbs, translate the verses like this:

"Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents." Note the period instead of the colon (KJV) or the comma (NKJV). Jesus emphatically denied that his blindness was caused by either. As in many other cases, Jesus abruptly brushes aside false teaching. And then He continued. "But that the works of God should be made manifest in him, we must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: The night cometh when no man can work." (Night is a reflection of death. Opportunities pass quickly. Don't waste your life away.) "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

-Jesus did not say that God permitted this blindness in order that He might get glory from it. He simply recognized the fact of the man's condition and refused to debate the cause.

III. The Cure for the Man – John 9:6-7

It just hit me as I was preparing this message, there is no record that Jesus even asked this man if he wanted to be healed and receive

his sight. I'm sure he did, but Jesus just simply knelt before the man, spat on the dusty ground, made clay with His saliva, and anointed his eyes.

-I wonder if the disciples thought, "Why is Jesus doing that. He's already blind. How is adding mud to a blind man's eyes going to help him see?"

One other time it is recorded that Jesus spat to bring about a cure. In Mark 7:33, they had brought a man who was deaf and mute for Jesus to heal. Jesus used some kind of sign language to tell the man what he was going to do. Then Jesus put His finger in his ears, spat on His finger and touched the man's tongue and he was healed.

It is interesting that Jesus spat on the ground. Often, when our spit is released it is in a fit of rage, in the height of anger and will sometimes spit on a victim. In this way, spit is in association with a curse.

-You will remember as Jesus stood before the High Priest at His trial and they accused Him of blasphemy, they spat in His face; an insulting way of judging Him.

Why did Jesus spit on the ground, make mud, put it on the man's eyes and tell him to wash in the Pool of Siloam? I don't know; nor does anyone else, though there have been a lot of guesses.

-I'll tell you this, He didn't have to use the mud or the Pool to heal the man.

Whatever the reason, Jesus demonstrates the beautiful principle that He uses different approaches on different people.

-The same is true in salvation. Most of us are so insecure in our faith that we want everybody to receive salvation the same way and we want everyone to express it the same way we did.

Jesus healed three blind men and He did each a different way.

- In Matt. 9:29 Jesus healed a blind man by touching his eyes.
- In Mark 8:22-26 Jesus spat on a blind man's eyes and touched his eyes Twice before he could see.
- Here is John 9 Jesus spat on the ground, made clay, put the clay on his eyes and told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam.

Vance Havner said if the three groups ever got together, they would each try to convert each other to the method Jesus used on them and form three different denominations: The One Touch Baptist, The Two Touch Baptist, and The Mud-in-the-Eye Baptist.

Helen Keller said that the greatest tragedy is to have two good eyes and still not be able to see.

When they asked this man, what happened to him and how he could see, he said, "Jesus did it." The tense in the Greek is that he Kept On saying, "Jesus did it, Jesus did it, Jesus did it."

-Note John 9:24-25 If you have been given spiritual sight, one thing you know, "I once was blind, but now I see, and Jesus did it!"

It is no secret what God can do, what He's done for others, He'll do for you. With arms wide open, He'll pardon you, It is no secret what God can do."

IV. The Conversion of the Man – John 9:35-38

Watch the progress of this man's faith: In 9:11, he calls Him "a man called Jesus;" in 9:17, he calls Him "a Prophet;" in John 9:33, he calls Him a man of God; in John 9:38, he said, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped Him.

What a testimony! "I once was blind, but now I see!" Jesus touched him and he was changed forever.

-Do you have a testimony like that? When you receive spiritual sight, people will know it.

A little boy heard the pastor say, "You can ask Jesus to come into your heart and He'll come in." The little boy said to the pastor, "But Jesus is a man in a man's body. I'm just a little boy. If I ask Him to come in, He'll be sticking out all over me!" The pastor said, "That's right."

Salvation: An Eye-Opening Experience John 9:8-25

Before Reading the Passage

John 9 deals with the miracle of making a man who was born blind, see.

-Jesus and His disciples left the temple area because the Jews had picked up stones and were about to stone Him to death because He claimed to be the Son of God.

-It was the Sabbath Day and these Jews, who wanted to put Jesus to death for healing a cripple man on the Sabbath day just a few days earlier, were picking up stones to stone Jesus on the Sabbath day! In other words, it was wrong for Jesus to heal a man on the Sabbath day, but it didn't bother them to put Jesus to death on the Sabbath day.

-As Jesus and His disciples left the temple area, Jesus saw a man who had been born blind.

-The disciples didn't see this man in Pity, but they did see him as a theological puzzle. They asked, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Jesus said that neither he nor his parents were the cause of him being born blind, but that the glory of God might be made known through him.

-Then Jesus spat on the ground, made clay and put the clay on his eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam and he would see.

-That's a strange thing to do! Putting clay on a seeing man's eyes would make the seeing man blind, but Jesus put mud on a blind man's and told him to go wash and he was able to see.

Now we are going to see a strange reaction to this miracle from this man's friends, his foes, and his family.

Read the Passage

I. The Curiosity of His Friends John 9:8-12

-These friends and neighbors who had known him a long time; maybe saw him every day, began to argue among themselves.

-Some said, "He's the same man." Others said, "No, it just looks like him." The man said, "It's me!"

-Have you ever been around someone that just met Jesus and Jesus made such a change in their life that folks wonder if it's the same person?

-"Well, it sure looks like him/her, but they sure are different. He/She don't talk the same... Speech is different...They talk about things they've never talked about before.

-"Their interest is different. They were never interested in the Bible or the church or the things of God before; now, that's all they're interested in." What happened?

-The tense of the verb in John 9:10 is that they kept asking him how he got his sight back.

-2 Cor. 5:17

II. The Condemnation of His Foes John 9:13-17, 24-34

-His friends bring him to his foes, the Pharisees and even they are confused and divided.

John 9:13-16

-The same tense of the verb is used...The Pharisees asked him over and over, "How did you receive your sight?"

-Notice the division: Some said Jesus was not of God; others said that a sinner couldn't open blinded eyes.

-Verse John 9:17 They start asking again how he received his sight.

-Verse John 9:24-25 Note: "We know" and "one thing I know" "Give God the glory" means confess your sins. Tell the truth.

-Verse John 9:26-34 In sarcasm he said, "Why do you want to hear the story again, do you want to become one of His disciples, too?"

III. The Cowardness of His Family John 9:18-23

-No doubt these parents had prayed that their son would be healed, but now they refuse to support him. Why?

-To be put out of the temple meant to be ostracized. They would lose their jobs, their standing in the community; they could not buy or sell products.

-I wonder how it made the blind man feel when his parents wouldn't support him. I've seen that happen. Parents who want their children to be saved, but not too saved. Not to preach or be a missionary, or marry a preacher.

Two miracles took place in John 9 – Physical healing and spiritual healing.

-This man is not saved yet, but he is ripe for the picking.

-Note John 9:35-41

-John 9:35 "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

• That is the all important question! A man's eternal destiny depends on the answer to that question.

• Notice that the question is personal...Do you believe?

-Jesus is about to turn the spiritual light on so he can see John 9:36-38

- "Lord, I believe" ...At salvation this man committed himself to Jesus as Lord...and the second miracle takes place.

-The word "Lord" is used 747 times referring to Jesus in the N.T. The word "Savior" is used 24 times.

-In the Book of Acts "Lord" is used 92 times; Savior only 2 times

Lord is who He Is; Savior is what He Does.

-Rom. 10:9-10, 13

Here's what this man learned: Salvation is an inside job!

Have you learned that?

Jesus: The Gateway to Glory

John 10:1-10

John 10 is a precious chapter in the Word of God. Jesus reveals so much about His heart and His mission in the 42 verses of this great passage.

-It should be noted that John 10:1-8 speaks to the Jew and focus primarily on the lost sheep of Israel. However, John 10:9 declares the glorious truth that Jesus is not just the Door for the lost sheep of Israel, but for the lost sheep of the whole world. Jesus opens wide the door of salvation and makes a sweeping promise to all those who will enter in to a relationship with Himself. To those who do, Jesus promises some very special blessings.

When we come to John 10, Jesus uses a new illustration. He talks about a sheepfold; in fact, two sheepfolds.

He also continues to condemn the Pharisees. In John 9, He calls them false teachers. As John 10 opens, Jesus adds that the Pharisees are also Thieves, Robbers, and Strangers.

*Thieves – John 10:1

The word “thief” is the word “klephts,” from which we get our word “kleptomaniac”. It refers to a sneak-thief, using deception to get to the sheep. He steals cunningly.

*Robbers – John 10:1 One who steals, using force and violence.

*Strangers – John 10:5 Strangers do not know or care for the sheep, but only for themselves. He also calls them “hirelings”, who do not love the sheep, but want to fleece the sheep; not lead the sheep.

Then, John 10 focuses on the image of sheep, sheepfolds, and shepherds. Why the shepherd and the sheep?

-Because in the Jewish mind, a “shepherd” was any kind of leader, spiritual or political.

- People looked on the king and prophets as shepherds.
- Israel was privileged to be “the flock of the Lord”. (Ps. 100:3)

Jesus pictures two kinds of sheep pens or sheepfolds in these verses.

(1)A Community Sheepfold – John 10:1-6

Because shepherds were 24/7 with their sheep, they at times needed a break. They would lead their sheep to the community sheepfold. The community sheepfold was made of large, stone walls ten to twelve feet high with thorn bushes growing to the top of the walls. There was only one opening or door in the wall where the sheep could go in and out. A porter was hired to be the door of the sheepfold. He would actually lie in the door opening so that nothing could go into or out of the sheepfold without going over him. He checked to make sure the shepherds were who they said they were when they came to get their sheep.

-Sometimes there would be three, five, or ten flocks in one large community pen.

The sheep were not branded and there were no computer systems, so how did the shepherd separate his sheep from the others when it was time? By his voice! The sheep would follow only their shepherd's voice.

(2)A Country or Hillside Sheepfold – John 10:7-9

A shepherd would make a circle with rocks, one on top of the other on the hillside. Again, the shepherd would lie down in the one narrow opening, becoming a Living Door! Nothing could get in unless it went through him. His own body became the “gate” or “door”. That is exactly what Jesus meant to convey, that His Body would be the entrance into eternal life.

The Door is a Person! Jesus says that He is that Person; that Door. No one gets into God's flock without going through Him. Salvation only comes about through faith in Jesus!

-All other attempts to get into the fold demonstrates that they are thieves and robbers.

I. Jesus is the Door to Acceptance – John 10:7, 9

Jesus makes it clear that all roads DON'T lead to Heaven! It has become politically correct to hold the idea that many religions are right

and good, and that sincere followers of these religions will be saved, too.

-Jesus strikes down any such notion. There can be only ONE gate into the sheepfold, and Christ Himself is that gate.

A. Jesus is the Exclusive Door

A Building without a door would be a vault sealed in death.

-A divine plan without a door would be meaningless, unreachable, useless. Christ came to be the means whereby those who were afar off might be made nigh.

-When I say that Jesus is the Exclusive Door, I mean He is the ONLY Door. You say, "Preacher, that's mighty narrow!" You've got it! There was but one door in Noah's Ark; there was only one door in the Tabernacle in the wilderness; and there is but one way into heaven, and that is by Jesus.

-Acts 4:12

B. Jesus is the Inclusive Door

Jesus is the ONLY Door, but He is the OPEN Door! There is only one door, but anyone may enter in and be saved.

-What a blessing! Did you know that your name is in the Bible? Now, I've never found Lowell or Bob or Sue or Sherry in the Bible, but I've found something better: "Whosoever will".

-What a blessing to be included; to be accepted!

I am so happy in Christ today, that I go singing along my way;

Yes, I am so happy to know and say, Jesus included me, too!

Jesus included me, yes, He included me, When the Lord said, "Whosoever" He included me, too!

C. Jesus is the Door of Exclusion

An open door issues an invitation, but a shut door and especially a locked door is something to be feared.

-A shut door means separation. There is a vast difference between being inside or outside when the door is closed.

-It is impossible to be on both sides of the door at the same time. Some will be shut IN; others SHUT out!

One door and only one, and yet the sides are two; I'm on the inside, on which side are you?

The time must come when the door will close. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not."

D. Jesus is the Door of Entrance

Doors are made to be used, and when this is done, a person passes from one place to another.

-Unless you use the door, the door is useless to you. You've got to do more than just look at the door or examine the door. You must enter and pass through the door!

-There's nothing hard about entering through a door! Nothing complicated! Just make the decision to walk through it and do it!

E. Jesus is the Door of Protection

Inside the door there is warmth, comfort, refuge, and protection. The question is, "Have you entered into salvation by the one and only Door?" To enter in means you will be saved, safe, and satisfied.

II. Jesus is the Door to Adventure – John 10:9c

The phrase, "and shall go in and out and find pasture" implies liberty and adventure.

-There is nothing dull about the Christian life. There are new things to discover about our Shepherd every day.

-Our wonderful Shepherd feeds us, leads us, provides for us, protects us, and pursues us!

Listen to some song writers:

HE LEADETH ME! O BLESSED THOUGHT

1. He leadeth me! O blessed tho't! O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!

Whate'er I do, Where'er I be, still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!

3. Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, nor ever murmur nor repine,

content, whatever lot I see, since 'tis thy hand that leadeth me!

He leadeth me, He leadeth me, By his own hand He leadeth me:

His faithful foll'wer I would be, for by His hand He leadeth me.

When we walk with the Lord, In the light of His Word
What a glory He sheds on our way

While we do His good will, He abides with us still
And with all who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet, we will sit at His feet
Or we'll walk by His side in the way
What He says we will do, where He sends, we will go
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Moment by moment, I'm kept in His love;
Moment by moment, I've life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O, Lord, I am Thine.

III. Jesus is the Door to Abundance – John 10:10

What is abundant life? It is not necessarily a long life or a life free of sickness and sorrow or a life where everything is just wonderful or beautiful. Nor is it an abundance of things.

Abundant life is green pastures, still waters, pursuing us when we stray, discernment of what is good for us to keep us spiritually healthy, safe and, most of all, in the presence of our Shepherd.

How do you qualify for abundant life? Do we have to be Brilliant, Beautiful, or Benevolent?
-No, we just have to follow our Shepherd who knows what's best for His sheep.

Have you entered into the Door of Salvation?

The Heavenly Shepherd John 10:11, 14-15, 17-18, 27-30

Nothing describes the relationship between Christ and His people like the relationship between the Shepherd and his sheep.
-Sprinkled throughout the Word of God you find this beautiful analogy of our Lord as our Heavenly Shepherd.

Psalm 23:1; Ps. 100:3; Isaiah 40:11

When God raises up great preaching evangelist, He seems to raise up great singing evangelist to serve beside them. He did so with John and Charles Wesley. He did so with Billy Graham and George Beverly Shea. Between these two great evangelistic teams was D.L. Moody and Ira Sankey.

-In 1874 while D.L. Moody and Ira Sankey were in Glasgow, Scotland at a train station, Sankey picked up a Glasgow newspaper and found a poem written by a young lady who wanted her brother to be saved. Sankey cut the poem out for his musical scrapbook. At the noon meeting on the second day of the meeting, Mr. Moody preached on "The Good Shepherd." Afterward Mr. Moody asked Sankey if he had a solo appropriate to the subject with which to close the service. Sankey, lifting his heart in prayer to God for help, placed the little newspaper slip on the organ and began to sing note by note the hymn to the tune to which it is still sung today. After Sankey died, George Beverly Shea sang it in Billy Graham crusades:

There were ninety and nine, that safely lay,
In the shelter of the fold;
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold-
Away on the mountains, wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine,
Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer, "This of mine
Has wandered away from Me;

And although the road be rough and steep
I go to the desert to find my sheep.”

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through,
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry,
Sick and helpless, and ready to die.

“Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way,
That mark out the mountain's track?”

“They were shed for one who had gone astray,
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.”

“Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?”
“They are pierced tonight by many a thorn.”

But all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a cry to the gate of heaven,
“Rejoice! I have found My sheep!”
And the angels echoed around the throne,
“Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!”

Jesus said, “I am the Good Shepherd;” Not “I was the Good Shepherd,” or “I will be the Good Shepherd.” He IS our present Good Shepherd.

- Nor does He say, “I am A Good Shepherd,” but THE Good Shepherd.
- “Good” in the sense of being morally good. The word also means “beautiful, winsome, lovely, attractive. Genuine and True as opposed to false and artificial.”
- He is Faithful in His responsibilities; hardworking and patient. Everything you would want in a shepherd; you find in Jesus. He is True, Tender, and Thoughtful.

I. The Good Shepherd Loves His Sheepfolds

Notice the contrast with the bad or false shepherd – John 10:12-13

A. He Saves His Sheep – John 10:9-11

He saves us by redeeming us with His precious blood. I Peter 1:18-19

-There is not one sheep of all His flock but what he can see the mark of His blood on him. On the heart and soul of every saint, the Savior sees His blood sweat at Gethsemane and His agonies at Golgotha.

- “You are not your own, for you are bought with a price.”

-Our names are written in His book.

They are Christ's sheep because He redeemed them and because His Father gave them to Him. They are a love-gift from the Father to His Beloved Son. He often speaks of His sheep in this way:

- “As many as thou has given me”
- “Thou has given me”
- “Thine they were and thou gavest them to me: and those that thou gavest me I have kept.”

B. He Knows His Sheep – John 10:14, 27

What a comfort! We belong to Him, personally; through a personal relationship with Him.

-He remembers when and where each of us as His Sheep were when we trusted Him and gave Him the title deed to our hearts and soul.

-In fact, no one knows us better than our Heavenly Shepherd; and He still loves us. He knows every strength and weakness. He knows our every joy and every burden. He knows our faults, our shortcomings, our faithfulness or unfaithfulness, our service to Him or lack of it, And He Still Loves Us!

Notice the contrast in Matt. 7:23 “I never knew you.”

C. He Cares for His Sheepfolds

Psalms 23 points out His Provisions and His Protection for His Sheep. And, He is always on duty!

-Psalm 121:1-8

D. He Keeps His Sheep Eternally – John 10:27-30

Sheep are weak, foolish, and need someone to watch over them. They often wander from the fold and have an incredible knack for getting dirty. Dirt clings to wool.

-Sheepskin is full of an oil called lanolin which comes through the skin and coats the wool. Every time a sheep lies down, grass, dirt, burrs, and everything imaginable clings to its coat. Sheep are huge, walking Velcro strips.

-Sheep remain dirty until someone cleans them. So, it is with us. We can't cleanse our own souls, but God can.

There is a difference between everlasting life and eternal life. Everlasting life refers to duration of time; deathless existence. Eternal life refers to quality of life; to be lifted to lofty realms to share the life of God.

II. The Good Shepherd Leads His Sheepfolds

Sheep are dumb. They have no sense of direction. They have no means of defense. Someone said that the only reason God made sheep was so He could show His children what they are like.

The Shepherd would often pick a ripe piece of fruit from a tree and lead the sheep with the fruit. He leads us as He Feeds us. So does our Heavenly Shepherd as we feed on His word.

Our Lord put two marks on His sheep: one on their ears and the other on their feet

- On their Ears: "my sheep Hear my voice"

It was Mary who said, "Whatsoever He says to you, Do It!"

- On their Feet: "And they Follow Me"

The best defense for sheep is to stay close to the shepherd and remain with the Lord. The same is true of us, isn't it?

-When we are out of fellowship with God and isolated from other Christians, we are most vulnerable. We need the shepherd's wisdom and strength to survive, as well as the comfort and encouragement of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

III. The Good Shepherd Lays Down His Life for His Sheep –

John 10:11, 15, 17-18

Four times Jesus says that He lays down His life for His sheep.

-In contrast, the hireling runs in the face of danger. The Good Shepherd sticks by His sheep, defends His sheep, will die for His sheep.

-Why? Because He loves His Sheep – John 15:13

A young man came home after WWII on a ship. His mother went to meet him. He was in a wheel chair. His mother said, "Son, stand up and greet me. It's your mother." He said, "I can't stand. I have no legs." She bent down and said, "Well, son, put your arms around me." He said, "I can't. I have no arms." The mother began to weep and said, "What a price you had to pay. You lost your legs and your arms." The young man straightened himself up to his full height and said, "No! I didn't lose my legs or my arms. I GAVE them on behalf of my country."

Jesus gave His all on your behalf and mine!

The Sheep and the Shepherd

John 10:27-30

What happens when a Christian sins?

- Can you lose your salvation when you sin? Or, are there certain sins that, if you're saved and commit them, you lose your salvation?
- That's an important question because we all sin, whether we're saved or not.

God has given His people some great promises and one of those promises is that once you are saved, you are saved forever...you can't lose your salvation...you are safe and secure in the Lord Jesus.

Let me give you some verses that will help seal that truth for you:

- *Romans 11:29 Salvation is a gift of God and God's gifts are irrevocable...He never withdraws His gifts once they are given...He does not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace. God is not an Indian Giver!
- I Cor. 1:8-9 God is faithful...reliable, trustworthy...and believers are assured of God's grace in their life to keep them saved until the day that Jesus catches us up in the rapture.

- Phil. 1:6
- Jude 24
- I Peter 1:3-5
- Heb. 10:14 In other words, if you are once truly saved, you are always saved.

If you have ever watched a carpenter do rough construction work, you may have seen him do something that will illustrate what the Lord was doing as He spoke these words to His disciples. Sometimes a carpenter will drive a long nail through a board so that part of the nail sticks out the back. Then he will drive the point of the nail over sideways, embedding it in the wood. This is called clinching the nail. It makes the joint just a bit firmer since the nail cannot work itself out from this position.

-In a sense this is what Jesus did in these verses. He was so interested in getting the doctrine to stick in His disciples' minds that He not only drove one nail, He drove two, and clinched them both.

-This is what I mean. First, He says, "I give them eternal life."

- This alone makes the truth fast; for eternal life is life that can never be lost. If it could be lost in one year...or five years...or ten years, it would not be eternal life. It would be one year life...or five year life...or ten year life...it would not be eternal life.

- Jesus knew that there would be many who would find this difficult to accept and who would attempt to explain it away by saying perhaps that eternal life is a quality of life rather than a life of unending duration.

- So, He went on to drive the nail over sideways, clinching it, and said, "They shall never perish" ...that is the clinch by which the doctrine is reinforced and made fast.

-One nail, however well fastened, does not always make a good joint. So, Jesus went on to drive a second nail and clinch that. The second nail is found in the phrase "No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

-Jesus says that we are secure in His hand, but then, lest we think that is not enough, Jesus adds that the hand of the Father is over His hand so that we are enclosed in two hands. We are doubly secure!

-If that is not enough, the Father and the Son still have two hands to defend us!

Some say, "Well, that doctrine should never be taught, even if it is true. It is a dangerous doctrine. If folks are taught that doctrine and believe that doctrine, they'd go out and sin all they want to since they could never be lost once they're saved."

- Well, I sin all I want to. In fact, I sin more than I want to. That's just the point...I don't want to sin.

- For someone who has those thoughts and attitude, I doubt if they have ever been saved.

- Two things will keep us from sinning though we know this truth: His love and grace for us and out of our gratitude for this great truth should make us love Him more and try harder to live a godly life as we ought ...second, the fear of the Lord and His judgement should make us want to live right.

Two things I want you to see in these verses:

I. The Shepherd's Sheep John 10:27

There are three characteristics that all of our Lord's sheep have in common. I invite you to test yourself by these three marks:

A. The Sheep's Attention to the Shepherd's

- "My sheep hear my voice" Real sheep have their hearts pitched to the voice of Christ.

-There is a focus on God's word, whether private reading of the Bible or public preaching of the message. In his heart he wants to know, "What is God wanting to say to me?"

B. The Sheep's Acknowledgment by the Shepherd

- "And I know them" Because Christ is omniscient, He knows everything about everybody, but here He's speaking about knowing us in a personal, intimate relationship.

-He knows our love for Him...our desire to be like Him...how much we want to live to please Him...How much commitment and dedication we have toward Him...Their thoughts, motives, hurts, heartaches.

-He gives this warning to those who have never trusted Him...on the day of judgment He will say to them, "I never knew you." Matt. 7:23

C. The Sheep's Allegiance Toward the Shepherd's

- "And they follow me" Hearing the voice of Christ is not enough. Real sheep follow Him... they are obedient to Him.

-He asks, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not the things I say?"

-You don't brand sheep like you do cattle, but the Puritans use to say, "The Lord's sheep have two marks on them, one on their ear (hear His voice) and one on their foot (they follow me).

II. The Sheep's Shepherd John 10:28-29

A. The Shepherd's Provision for His Sheep

- "And I give them eternal life" Eternal life is His precious gift of pardon and grace in this world and a life of glory in the world to come.

-No one but God could say, "I give them eternal life."

-When do we get eternal life? When we die...that's when it starts...NO!! He did not say, "I will give them eternal life." He said, "I give them eternal life."

-John 5:24

B. The Shepherd's Protection of His Sheep

-“And they shall never perish” The Greek contains a double negative and literally reads, “And they shall not, not perish forever”...“They shall positively not perish, Never!”

-If we backslide into sin, we cannot lose our salvation, but we can lose our joy, our heavenly rewards, our peace, and our blessing from God. But real sheep can't lose their salvation. “They shall never perish!”

-Rom. 8:35-39

-The best thing for us to do is to stay close to our Shepherd.

There is a place of quiet rest...near to the heart of God.

A place where sin cannot molest...near to the heart of God.

There is a place of comfort sweet...near to the heart of God.

A place where we our Savior meet...near to the heart of God.

There is a place of full release...near to the heart of God.

A place where all is joy and peace...near to the heart of God.

O Jesus, blest Redeemer...sent from the heart of God.

Hold us, who wait before Thee...Near to the heart of God.

C. The Shepherd's Promise to His Sheep

- “And no one shall snatch them out of my hand.” Several times in scripture God's people are portrayed as in His hand:

-Isa. 49:2; 51:16

-Ps.95:7

-Isa. 49:15-16 “Thy walls (ways) are continually before me.”

“I have indelibly imprinted (tattooed) a picture of you on the palm of each of my hands” (AMP)

-When we come to Christ in faith, He makes us part of His body (Eph. 1:22-23).

When He takes us into His hands, we become fingers! If we could lose our salvation, it would be equivalent of Jesus losing a finger from His body. I can't see Christ in heaven with a mutilated frame.

-What do we know about the hands of our Lord?

(1) They are creative hands

He made us, which means He knows us because He did make us.

(2) They are caring hands

-Hosea 11 says that like a father teaching his child to walk, He takes our hands, holding us up while we're learning and catching us when we are about to fall down.

-His hands are always outstretched to us.

(3) His hands are chastening hands Heb.10:30-31

-We are not only in God's Grace, but also in His Grasp! Perfect security!

-Notice: It is not our hand holding on to God; it is God's hand holding on to us.

-If you want to lose your child in a crowd, ask him to hold on to you. But if you want to prevent him from getting lost, put your own hand around his.

-People who are insecure in their salvation have the false notion that the whole thing depends on them. It doesn't. It is the work of Christ from start to finish. He holds on to us.

-Why does our shepherd hold us so securely in His hand? For the reason He saved us in the first place. Because He loves us!

-Notice: “And no man shall pluck them out of my hand”. This implies that many will try to pluck away Christians from Christ and draw them back into sin.

-The world, the flesh and the devil are always pulling and plucking, trying to put distance between us and our Lord.

-Don't miss the beautiful picture of “God's Great Grip.”

-A Christian's security depends completely upon the strength of God's hand. We are in the hand of the Lord Jesus. But there is a Double Grip...We are also in the Father's hand. Plus, both the Son and the Father have one hand free to fend off any enemy!

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O, what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of Salvation, purchase of God, Born of His spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long.

This is my story, this is my song, Praising my Savior all the day long.

Can you go to heaven and not believe in the eternal security of the believer?

-Yes, but the trip won't be near as enjoyable.

-They had had an extremely cold weather up in the Great Lake area. A man traveling on foot across that area came upon a frozen lake. He began to wonder if the ice was thick enough to hold him up if he walked across the frozen lake. He moved very slowly, listening for any cracking sound. About half-way across he got down on his hands and knees and crawled, afraid the whole time the ice would crack. Then, suddenly, he heard a loud sound behind him. It was two horses pulling a wagon full of people coming across the frozen lake. All in the wagon were laughing and singing and having a good time. After they passed him and were safe on the other side, the man said, "How silly of me to have been afraid. Instead of crossing the lake in fear, I could have crossed in joy and peace."

God's honor is at stake in this matter of eternal security. If He lost one, He would break His covenant promise to us. That He will never do.

The secret is to make sure you are one of His sheep!

The Eternal Security of the Believer
John 10:27-30

Could I ask you a question? Is there anything better than being saved: being born again?

-Well, there is! The thing that is better than being saved is to be saved AND KNOW IT AND TO KNOW THAT YOU CAN NEVER, EVER LOSE YOUR SALVATION!

Our Lord did not hesitate to preach the deeper doctrines of the Gospel.

-A number of times in the Gospels after Jesus preached, someone would say, "This is a hard saying. Who can know it or who can understand it?"

To be a productive Christian, you need to know that your eternal future is absolutely secure. If we are not absolutely sure of our security in the Lord Jesus, we would always be worrying about our future. That kind of fear and doubt would cripple us spiritually and prevent us from reaching our fullest potential as believers because we could never focus on the task at hand.

Let me be very clear about what the Bible means when it presents the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer.

-The Bible refers to true believers; those who have had a personal experience of grace and have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

-They shall never perish. They shall never be lost. They shall never be cast away. Once in Christ, they shall always be in Christ. Once made children of God by adoption and grace, they shall never cease to be His children and become Children of the devil. Once pardoned and forgiven, they shall never be deprived of their pardon. Once joined to Christ by living faith, their union shall never be broken off.

Though true believers will be eternally secure, there are some things that are NOT meant:

1. Because one is eternally secure does not mean that they shall never fall into sin.

A saved person sadly and shamefully falls into sin. There is scriptural proof of that. Noah once fell into drunkenness. Abraham twice lied, saying that Sarah was his sister. Jacob deceived his father, Isaac. David committed adultery. Peter denied his Lord three times.

2. Because one is eternally secure does not mean that they will never have doubts and fears about their eternal security.

Many believers see how weak they are and how far they are from being holy men of God until they doubt the reality of their own grace, and fear they will never reach heaven. To BE SAFE is one thing; TO FEEL SURE AND SAFE is quite another. There are many True Believers who never enjoy the full assurance of hope all their days. The full assurance of hope is not necessary to salvation. Some of God's True children do not enjoy a sense of Total security because of their ignorance or lack of teaching or understanding of the word of God.

-Jesus never said that ye must be born again and again and again and again. You will look in vain for an example in the Bible where any person was ever saved twice. Heb. 6:4-6

-God's honor is at stake. If He were to lose ONE soul that was redeemed by the blood of Jesus, God would lose His honor and cease to be God!

Why is it important to understand that TRUE believers are eternally secure?

-What if a child did not know from day to day whether or not he was a member of his family? What if he thought that the day he was good, he was in the family, but the day he was bad, he was out of the family? One day his father loved him, the next day, he didn't. I tell you, that child would be an emotional and a psychological wreck. The fact is, regardless of your behavior, you are always going to be a

member of your family and there is nothing you or they can do about it. Why is that? Because you are born into the family and that can never be changed. So it is with God's family. You see, if you are in Jesus, you are a part of the family of God and He wants you to experience all the peace and security that all His children enjoy.

What about those who appear to be saved for a while and now have no interest in spiritual things. They used to attend church, they may have been baptized, they may have made a public profession of faith, they may have looked like a Christian and may have done all the things Christians do, but now they are in the world. We have all seen that happen. What about them?

- Jesus spoke of those kind of folks – Matt. 7:21-23

- John says that they were never really saved to start with. They didn't lose their salvation, they simply never had it to start with. The reason they fell away and stayed away is because they were never saved to start with. I John 2:19

If you are really saved, let me give you several reasons why you are eternally saved.

I. Because of God's Promise – John 10:27-29

God's promises are guarantees – Romans 4:21; Titus 1:2

-If you believe the Bible, you can believe in eternal security

. John 6:39; Romans 8:38-39

II. Because of God's Perseverance (not mine, His) Phil. 1:6

Who began the work? God! Who will complete the work? God! He brought us under conviction and then helped us receive Christ by giving us faith to trust Him. God will finish what He started.

III. Because of God's Predestination – Rom. 8:29-30

Those who receive Christ are predestined to go to Heaven and to be just like Jesus. It is impossible to be saved and then to be lost again, because it would destroy the predestined plan of Almighty God. He sees His redeemed as already in Heaven.

IV. Because God Perfected us – Heb. 10:14

Jesus made us perfect by His sacrifice. We are not perfect in our flesh; only our soul. If I step out of line, I will be chastened by the Lord, but I will still be viewed as perfect by the Father.

-Rom. 4:5-8; I Cor. 6:9-11. God has imputed the righteousness of the Lord Jesus to us and we are declared perfect because of His righteousness.

V. Because of our Position in Christ – 2 Cor. 5:17

The only way that a believer can lose his relationship with the Father is for the Son to do so first. That's total impossibility.

VI. Because of our Possession – John 5:24

We were given eternal life when we were saved. Not "ten year life"; not "until I sin life". We possess eternal life right now, not at death! It is the present, eternal possession of every child of God.

VII. Because of the Prayer of Christ – John 17:15, 20, 24

Jesus never prayed a prayer that wasn't answered in the affirmative because He always prayed in the Father's will. He prayed for our keeping and for our home going. You can rest assured that you are secure in the love of Christ.

VIII. Because of God's Power – I Peter 1:3-5

God's power is greater than any other and it is His power that keeps us saved! If Satan could get one believer out of the hand of God, he would have them all. That would mean if any went to heaven, he would go by the mercy of Satan. Satan has no mercy.

Are you a believer? If so rejoice, because you are eternally secure in Christ! Stop allowing Satan to kick you around. You are a child of God and you are going to heaven.

If you are lost, come to Jesus and be saved. Don't let your fears or your sins take you to Hell.

Lazarus, Come Forth!
John 11:1-7, 11-15, 17-45

John records seven sign miracles in his Gospel. The first sign miracle took place at a wedding; this last one took place at a Funeral. The first sign miracle was at a place of gladness; the last at a place of sadness. At this last sign miracle Jesus proclaims another of His "I Am" statements. Like all of the "I Am" claims of Christ in John's gospel, this great "I Am" statement points us to the sufficiency of Christ.

-In this declaration, "I am the Resurrection and the life," He reminded Mary and Martha that in the face of death, and in their hour of sorrow and grief, He was everything she needed.

Here in John 11 one of our Lord's dearest friends has died.

Someone has well said that man is the only creature who knows he is going to die and he tries desperately to forget it. Mention death and people will try to change the subject. When Hardly Denham was pastor of FBC Newton, MS., he was told by one of the leaders of the church to never preach on the subject of death. He said, "I wish I never had to preach on death or dying, but as long as men die, I must." Death and dying are not pleasant topics, but unless Jesus returns in our lifetime, every person will experience death. Heb. 9:27

A young boy saw a well-known T.V. preacher in a hospital. He said to the preacher, "I have watched you on T.V. And heard you talk about Heaven and Hell and eternity. Tell me, how far off is Heaven? How far off is Hell? How far off is eternity?" The wise preacher said, "Son, put your hand on your heart. What do you feel?" The boy said, "I feel a heartbeat." The preacher said, "That's it, son. How far off is Heaven? How far off is Hell? How far off is eternity? Just one heartbeat."

Let me introduce you to this little family from Bethany. It was a family and a home that the Lord Jesus enjoyed visiting. It was the kind of home where He could relax and get away from the pressures of life. He needed a place where He could laugh and enjoy good fellowship and a good meal. Three times John refers to the love between Jesus and this little family (John 11:3,5,36) Martha was the oldest sister and was a little bossy. She enjoyed serving the Lord. She was the main cook in the family and she enjoyed cooking those special meals for the Lord. Mary spent much of her time at the feet of Jesus, learning from Him, fellowshiping with Him, and worshiping Him. Lazarus was a quiet kind of fellow. There is not one recorded word that he ever spoke. He just had a quiet charm about him. But though he loved Jesus and was loved by Jesus and was near and dear to Jesus, it didn't shield him from suffering and sorrow. Nor will we be shielded from suffering and sorrow. Lazarus was sick unto death and the sisters sent word to Jesus.

Notice:

I. The Desperation – John 11:1-3

Bad things do happen to those who love Jesus and to those whom Jesus loves. Do you think that because something bad happens to you that Jesus does not love you or your family? Perhaps that's why this passage repeats again and again that each member of this family was loved by Jesus. John 11:3 "Lord, the one you love is sick." This is not an invitation or a request for the Lord to come to their home. They didn't say, "Lord, please come." They just assumed that as soon as the Lord learned of the situation, He would hurry to their home and heal Lazarus. But look at John 11:4. On the human level it appears that Jesus didn't care that much or He would have come at once!

II. The Delay

It may help you to know that our Lord's crucifixion was only a month away at this time.

So why did Jesus delay? Was it indifference? Was it because He didn't care? Was it because He was preoccupied? Was it because Jesus had something more important to do.

Look again at John 11:4. I'm sure they were looking for Jesus; wondering why He was not there. They were confused. But if they had heard our Lord's reply in John 11:4, they would have been even more confused.

Our Lord's delays are always purposeful. Love always has a purpose. Therefore, we are always right to seek the purposes for our Lord's delays.

- (1) Jesus delayed because He knew that Lazarus was already dead.
- (2) Jesus delayed because He purposed to raise Lazarus from the grave. Most Jews believed that the spirit of a person lingered near the body of the dead for three days. Jesus would wait for four days to give absolute assurance that His raising of Lazarus was by His power.
- (3) Jesus delayed that God would get glory from the miracle. Could He have healed Lazarus from a distance?" Of course. But everything He did, He did for the glory of God.
- (4) Jesus delayed because raising Lazarus after being dead for four days would inspire others to have faith in Him.

If Jesus knew that Lazarus was already dead, what did He mean in John 11:4 when He said, "This sickness is not unto death." By the way, that could be the motto printed and posted on the hospital wall of every Christian who ever faces a terminal illness. Here is what Jesus was saying about His friend, Lazarus who was already dead: "His sickness INCLUDED death, but it DID NOT END in death!" Death is a phrase; not a finality. It's temporary; not terminal. The second phrase is "this death is for the glory of God so that God's Son maybe glorified through it."

Notice John 11:7-10 "Go back to Judea". It sounds almost suicidal! "Lord, they just tried to kill you there."

Note John 11:9-10 In other words, Jesus was saying, "I have a little window of opportunity to accomplish my remaining work before night falls on my earthly work."

Notice John 11:11-17 Again, this is the second phase that tells us that death is not a finality. Dying is falling asleep in Jesus. This is N.T. Language. This is Jesus language.

- When a ruler named Jairus came to Jesus to ask Him to come and touch his twelve-year-old daughter who was dying, before Jesus arrived at the home, the little girl passed away. When Jesus arrived and heard the loud crying, he sent folks out of her room, saying, "She is not dead, but asleep." The people laughed at Jesus, but He took her by the hand and lifted her up.
- In Acts 7: 59-60, Stephen, the first person martyred for his faith in Christ, when he died, we read that "he fell asleep."
- Acts 13:36 David "fell asleep."
- In I Thess. 4, Paul talks about those "who have fallen asleep in Him."

Sleep is harmless and temporary. It speaks of Rest, Relief, and Rising again. Our word cemetery comes from the Greek word that means "sleeping places" or "sleeping chambers." The word "resurrection" means "to stand up." After death, we will stand up again.

III. The Demonstration – John 11:20-27, 32

Both Martha and Mary meet the Lord and offer both Praise and Protest. They both focus on what might have been: "If only" Are you haunted by the ghost of the "if onlys" in your past? "If only I had not said that; if only I had not done that; if only I had taken him seriously; if only I had prayed about it."

Notice John 11:33-38 Notice the genuine sympathy of our Lord.

The poet puts it this way:

Does Jesus care when I've said "goodbye"
To the dearest on earth to me,
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks-
Is it aught to Him? Does He see me?

O yes, He cares – I know He cares!
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Savior cares.

IV. The Directions – John 11:39-45

Jesus asked that the stone be taken away. Some believed that Jesus wanted to see Lazarus one more time. Martha says that it's better to remember him as he was because it has been four days and decomposition has begun. By now, he has begun to stink! Can you imagine those folks around the tomb? There is silence now! Weeping has stopped now. All eyes are on Jesus; then on the sisters.

Jesus prays to His Father, asking Him to grant His request and to magnify Himself and get glory to Himself and that others would believe on Him. With a loud Voice, Jesus says, "Lazarus, come forth." All eyes were on the opening of that tomb. Suddenly, Lazarus stands up, moves outside the tomb, wrapped in grave clothes. What do you think was going through the minds of those standing there? Jesus says, "Loose him, remove the grave clothes and let him go." How would you like to have been the one who unwrapped him? How do you think Lazarus felt? What was going through his mind? Remember he had been to paradise and now here he is back on earth. Think of the sights he told them about!

It's interesting that Jesus put two truths together. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Lazarus needed both a resurrection, and life after resurrection. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection." That would get Lazarus up! Then Jesus added, "And the life." That would keep him up.

You know that this was not as much a resurrection as a resuscitation, for Lazarus died again. The resurrected will never die again.

What happened to Lazarus? John 12:1-2 He went from the tomb to the table. Then, of all things, the religious folks wanted to put him to death again. John 12:9-11 Have you ever wondered what death will be like?

Peter Marshall told a story of a lady who was in his congregation. This lady had a boy who was incurably ill and in some near distant time would die. She ministered to him as best she could, but she watched him week after week and day by day and soon saw that her son that she loved so much get weaker and weaker and she knew that the time would soon come. One night as she sat with her son, he was more quiet than usual and she knew something was on his mind, so she said, "Son, what's the matter?" He looked up into his mother's eyes and he said, "Mother, what is it going to be like to die? Will it hurt?" For a moment, she said that she couldn't speak. Then it was as if God gave her a revelation and she began to share that thought with her son. She said, "Listen. Remember those times when you come in from playing, and you've played all day and you fall on the couch and go to sleep. Remember those times." She said, "You know that's not where you belong, that's not your bed, and you're not dressed right, but you go to sleep there. And then you wake up in the morning and low and behold, you are in your own bed and you have your own PJ's on and you are in your own room, just where you are supposed to be! The reason that happens is because somebody loves you and cares for you and the big strong arms of your father has picked you up and taken you to your bed and has fixed you the way you ought to be." She said, "Son, that's what death is going to be like. Someday you will go to sleep and you will wake up in the other room – your own room – the place where you are supposed to be. And it will be because somebody loves you and cares for you and the strong arms of God have taken you there.

The Tears of Jesus

John 11:32-36

Jesus wept!

Tears talk! I know that lips and tongues talk, but tears talk. Tears have a lot to say. They have a language all their own. They speak of joy, of hurt, of celebration, of pain. "Tears are liquid emotion, pressed from the heart."

Tears are all through the Bible:

- Abraham wept when Sarah, his wife, died.
- David and his best friend, Jonathan, wept together.
- Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet.
- Peter wept because he failed his Lord.
- Paul wept because of the burden he carried for the lost.

But...Jesus wept and when the son of God weeps, it ought to grab our attention.

We live in a strange world and get wrong information when we are told:

- Big boys don't cry. Tough guys and strong people don't cry. No?
- I've heard folks say, "Crying is a sign of weakness or a lack of faith."
- I've heard folks tell other folks, "Don't cry. You have to hold up for the others; maybe for children or for the other family members. Don't cry!"

But here we see, God in tears! Why would Jesus weep?

I. The Reason for Our Lord's Tears

Three times we are told that Jesus cried and for three different reasons:

A. Jesus wept over sorrows – John 11:33-35

Lazarus was one of our Lord's closest and dearest friends. Jesus enjoyed the relationship He had with Lazarus. He loved being in his home. It was a place he could relax, get away from the pressures of life, eat a good meal and talk about pleasant things and spiritual things. No one there put on airs. Jesus just enjoyed being around these folks. But Lazarus had died. A great storm of emotions was stirring the heart and mind of Jesus. And, He wept. The tears of Mary and Martha touched the heart of our Lord and when He saw them weeping, He could not but help weeping with them. Down His holy cheeks trickled tears. Those standing by remarked, "Behold how He loved him." When Jesus called Lazarus from the dead, His face was still wet and stained with tears. He is our sympathizing Friend and Brother.

Notice again John 11:35. Whoever divided the N.T. into verses seemed to stop with amazement at the text, making an entire verse out of two words. This is the shortest verse, but the of the deepest. Add a word to the verse, and it would be out of place. In fact, the verse ought to be written in all capitals, JESUS WEPT!

B. Jesus wept over sin (not His, but the sins of others) Luke 19:41

It was Palm Sunday. The crowd was about to shout "Hosanna", but Jesus knew that in a few days many in that crowd would shout: "Crucify Him!"

-Jesus wept over them because their eyes were blind and they were in bondage to sin and their eternal doom.

When General William Booth was the head of the Salvation Army, one of their missionaries wrote back from England, wanting to come home. He said, "Gen. Booth, I've tried everything." Gen. Booth sent back this two word reply: "Try Tears!" Ps. 126:5-6

C. Jesus wept over His suffering – Heb. 5:7-9

On the night of our Lord's arrest, He wept.

In a dream a man saw Christ being scourged. As the tormentor swished the whip through the air, striking with its little bits of pointed metal into the victim's back, the man could stand it no longer. Running forward, he yelled, "Stop!" But on reaching the tormentor and looking into his face, to his horror, he saw himself.

When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hanged Him on a tree.

They drove great nails through His hands and feet, and they made a Calvary. They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His wounds and deep.

For those were crude and cruel days and human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to our town, they simply passed Him by

They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die.

For men had grown more tender and they would not give Him pain;

They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.

II. The Revelation of our Lord's Tears – John 11:33-35

Tears touch the heart of Jesus. He is the unseen mourner at every funeral and He cares when we say "good-bye" to the dearest on the earth to us.

Often, you've wondered why tears come into your eyes
and burdens seem to be much more than you can stand.

But God is standing near, He sees your falling tears.

Tears are a language God understands.

When grief has left you low, it causes tears to flow

Things have not turned out the way that you had planned

But God won't forget you, His Promises are true.

Tears are a language God understands.

God sees the tears of a broken-hearted soul,

He sees your tears and hears them when they fall.

God weeps along with man and takes him by the hand;

Tears are a language God understands.

III. The Removal of Tears

If this chapter before us had finished with "Jesus wept", it would have been a sad chapter. Suppose, after they had come to the grave, we had read, "Jesus wept, and went about His daily business." There would be little comfort in the passage. If nothing had come of it but tears, it would be much different from the usual ways of our Lord. Tears! What are they alone? Salt Water.

A cup of them would be of little worth to anyone. But, "Jesus wept," and then He commanded, "Roll away the stone." Then He cried, "Lazarus, come forth!" When Lazarus struggled out of the tomb, Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go."

A Jesus who never wept could never wipe away my tears. Jesus stands to say, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "Death has no more dominion over Him."

The last time we read about tears for the saint in the Word of God is found in Rev. 21:4.

-There won't be any hospitals or funeral homes in heaven. All will be health, life, and love.

-God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. "No tears in Heaven fair, no tears, no tears up there. Sorrow and pain will all have gone."

But for the lost person, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 25:30

-The most often used description of hell given in the Bible is not Fire, but tears, weeping, and suffering.

-Those who reject the one who wept for them will weep forever.

A Portrait of Extravagant Worship John 12:1-11

Before Reading the Passage:

There are certain scenes in scripture that seem too sacred and too priceless to touch. It's almost as if the Lord says to us, "Take the shoes off your feet, you are standing on Holy ground." John 12-20 records the last week of our Lord's life here on earth. It records His final hours on earth. We come here with a high sense of respect and reverence.

-It is as though the Holy Spirit is saying, "Here is where He spent His final days. Here is what He did and this is the way He died. Just be quiet and experience it. Take time to feel the emotion and to grasp the significance of these words.

Simon, a leper that Jesus had healed, invited Jesus and His disciples to a dinner meal. Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead, was there, alone with Mary and Martha. Seventeen people in all.

What a beautiful scene this is!

Simon opens his Home to Jesus. Martha opens her Hands and serves the guest, Mary opens her Heart of love and anoints the head and feet of Jesus with a perfume worth a year's wages, between 20,000 and 25,000 dollars in today's economy. The essence of love is to ask, "How much can I do;" not, "How little can I do." Love has no limits and neither does hatred as we shall see as we look at the first recorded words of Judas.

Mary is about to express extravagant love to our Lord as she takes a pound of spikenard and anoints the head and feet of our Lord. A Roman pound was twelve ounces; not sixteen. Why was the spikenard so expensive? Spikenard grows in the Himalaya mountains in India at high elevations from 11,000 to 17,000 feet. The roots and spikes of the plant were used to make perfumes. Mary is about to express extravagant worship upon the Lord Jesus.

The word "extravagant" is defined as spending too much, by spending excessive; beyond what is reasonable, of going overboard and doing too much. When it comes to worshiping our Lord Jesus, nothing is too extravagant. After all, He is worthy of everything we can render to Him, because all we have comes from Him anyway. No gift is excessive; no expression of love is over the top. The worship of Mary has much to teach us about our own worship of the Lord Jesus.

Gloria Gaither and Bill George wrote a song based on John 12, entitled "Broken and Spilled Out". I would like to change the word "Spilled" to "poured", because when you spill something, it is an accident. What Mary did was intentional. Listen to the words:

One day a plain village woman
Driven by love for her Lord
Recklessly poured out a valuable essence
Disregarding the scorn

And once it was broken and spilled out
A fragrance filled all the room
Like a prisoner released from his shackles
Like a spirit set free from the tomb.
Broken and spilled out
Just for love of you, Jesus
My most precious treasure
Lavished on thee

Broken and spilled out
And poured at your feet
In sweet abandon
Let me be spilled out
And used up for Thee.

Lord, You were God's precious treasure
His loved and His own perfect Son
Sent here to show me the love of the Father
Just for love it was done.
And though you were perfect and holy
You gave up Yourself willingly
You spared no expense for my pardon
You were used up and wasted for me.

Broken and spilled out
Just for love of me, Jesus
My most precious treasure
Lavished on me
Broken and spilled out
And poured at my feet
In sweet abandon
Let me be spilled out
And used up for me.

Read the passage:

What a beautiful scene this is. I can imagine the conversation that must have taken place during that meal.

-Simon must have told how the Lord healed him of leprosy. How the rotting flesh had grown back and now was as smooth as a baby's flesh; how his fingers that had fallen off reappeared; how his eyebrows had grown back; how much he loved the Lord for all that he had done.

I think Lazarus must have said, "Well, that's nothing, Simon. I was in another world for four days. I saw the "biggies" - Abraham, Moses, David, and all the rest. And I saw Paradise! But when I walked out of that tomb and they loosed me from those grave clothes, Peter's eyes were as big as plates!" They must have asked Lazarus all kinds of questions: "What did you see on the other side? What was it like to come back to life?"

Now we come to the heart of the passage. Watch as Mary expresses her love for Jesus!

Three things I want you to see:

I. The Devotion of Mary – John 12:3

Mary's heart was about to burst with love for Jesus and she just had to show Him how much she loved Him. She gets up from the table, goes to get an expensive vial of perfume and anoints our Lord's head and feet.

Matthew 26 and Mark 14 record this incident and they call the vial of perfume an Alabaster Box. You need to know what an alabaster box is. It is actually a small vase which held about twelve ounces of costly perfume. The perfume was so precious that a special vase was made for the perfume. It was made of clay. The potter would shape the little vessel very carefully like he would any small vase until he got to the top. Then he would make a long, thin neck that could be easily broken to let out a small amount at one time, and after the perfume was put into the vase, he would seal it at the top so that all could be kept until a special time, and then be resealed.

Mary loved her brother, but she did not put the treasured perfume on her dead brother. She saved it for Jesus! Watch her as she takes that alabaster box; breaks the top off, pours some of it on our Lord's head and some on His feet, and dries His feet with her hair.

In Christ's day, people did not sit at a table to eat their meals. The tables they used were low to the floor, and the people reclined around the table at meal time. Typically, their heads were near the table while their feet were farther away. This would mean that anyone walking up to a person in such a position would be considerably taller than the person at the table. It is, therefore, assured that Mary would have assumed a kneeling position near Jesus, in order to anoint His head and His feet with the ointment.

In this one moment of time, Mary was making a great statement of surrender. By kneeling to Him and anointing Him, she was declaring her faith in Him as the Messiah. She was telling everyone who saw her do what she did that her faith was in the Lord Jesus Christ. She,

at that moment, surrendered all to Him!

Mary was more in touch with Jesus than any of His disciples were. Jesus had said over and over that he was going to die, but none of them got it. In fact, only one person got it, and that was Mary. The disciples were with Jesus much more than Mary and heard Him speak many more times than Mary, so why did she get it and they did not?

Every time we see Mary, she is at our Lord's feet listening and learning and loving Him. Three times Mary appears in the Gospels center stage.

(1) The first time she appears is at her own home. Martha is working, preparing a meal for Jesus and others and Mary is sitting at His feet listening to Him teach. Luke 10:38-42.

(2) The next time we meet her is at the tomb of Lazarus. He has just died and Jesus has arrived at the tomb. Mary runs to Jesus and bows at His feet in supplication, John 11:28-32.

(3) The last time we see her, she offers her worship to Him because of what He means to her, John 12:1-11; Mark 14:1-9; Matt, 26:6-13.

1. The first time, she is at His feet Learning: Hearing His word.
2. The next time, she is at His feet Learning, Experience His works, John 11
3. Here, she is at His feet Loving: Declaring His worth, John 12

Washing feet was something a humble servant would have done. Mary was laying herself, her pride, her position, her everything aside and she wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. When Mary did this, she was humbling herself and laying her glory at His feet because the glory of a woman is her hair, I Cor. 11:15.

You see, everyone there that day had a reason to worship the Lord Jesus:

- Lazarus had just been raised from the dead; but he was not worshiping, he was watching.
- Simon the Leper had been healed of Leprosy, and the God of Creation was dining at his house, but he wasn't worshiping, he is also watching.
- Martha had witnessed Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead just like Mary did, but she is not worshiping, she is working and worrying.
- Eleven of the disciples had experienced the saving touch of Jesus and were blessed to be with Him, but they were not worshiping, they are just watching.
- Judas Iscariot is in the presence of the only One who could save him from his sins and deliver his soul from hell, but he is complaining and finding fault, instead of worshiping.
- Mary is the only one worshiping and Jesus said that wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will be told as a memorial to her.

I gave my life for thee, My precious blood I shed
That thou might'st ransomed be, and quickened from the dead
I gave, I gave my life for thee, What hast thou given for me?
I gave, I gave my life for thee, What hast thou given for me?

II. The Denouncement of Mary – John 12:4-6

Mark 14:4 says, "they rebuked her harshly." The Greek indicates that they "snorted their indignations like an angry horse."
-Why would someone criticize another for doing a good deed? Someone said that it takes no size to criticize!

These are the first recorded words of Judas in the N.T., and they reveal his heart. His complaint was about doing too much for Jesus. Judas sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, or about 120 denarii. Mary gave an offering of two-and-a-half times that amount in worship of the Lord! There are always those who think the church can do too much or give too much to the cause of Christ. Did you notice? It was Judas who incites the disciples to anger (Matthew 26:8).

G. Campbell Morgan said, "It's a great compliment to be criticized by certain people."

Why this waste? "That's a year's wages worth! Listen, if she just had to wash His feet, she could have used water! Why go to the extreme? Why the waste?" Nothing we do for Jesus is a waste!

Did you notice that Mary never tried to defend herself? She knew that even if she tried to explain, people with that kind of spirit would never understand anyway. They are the "ask how little can we do for Jesus" folks. They know nothing of the spirit of Mary in giving your best to the Master.

John adds that Judas “cared nothing for the poor, but was a thief.” The Greek word for “thief” forms our English word “kleptomaniac,” which is a person who is a compulsive thief. He held the bag of money and he had been lifting, robbing, and pilfering from the bag all along.

III. The Defense of Mary – Matt. 26:10-13

“**Leave her alone**” means, “That’s enough! Stop it! She had done nothing wrong and everything right! Jesus didn’t hesitate to come to Mary’s defense and rebuke them. Matt. 26:10 “She has done a good work upon me”. There are two Greek words for good. One means morally good. The other word, which is used here, means something beautiful, winsome, lovely. It is communicated love. Why did Jesus call it a beautiful work? Because He was aware of her loving motive; her beautiful heart and spirit. There is a beautiful truth here: She could not pour the perfume on Jesus and wipe His feet with her hair without getting some on herself and blessing others as well. Many of us have unused perfume. We need to break a vase and anoint the Lord. He would be honored. We would be blessed and so would others.

A Parade for Jesus John 12:12-19

Before Reading the Passage:

Let me tell you where we are in relation to our Lord's life and His death on the cross. Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead! He was the talk of the town! A man was dead for four days and Jesus raised him from the dead! Then Simon the Leper, who Jesus healed, invited Jesus to a Supper, along with His disciples, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. There were seventeen there in all. It was after this supper that Mary anointed our Lord's head and feet with perfume and wiped His feet with her hair. Judas rebuked Mary, calling what she did to Jesus a waste. It was then that Jesus rebuked Judas and told him to leave her alone. What she had done was a good thing. Matt. 26:14-16 tells us that Judas slips away that night to the Chief Priest and agreed to betray Jesus to them. And from that time, he sought opportunity to betray Jesus.

The next day is Sunday. It is only four days until Passover. The Jewish leaders want to put Jesus to death, but not during the Passover Celebration. Their plan was to seize Him and execute Him after the feast was over and the people had dispersed. But regardless of the enemy’s desires, the Lord would die at the precise time foreordained in God's eternal plan. Fittingly, the Lamb of God would be sacrificed on the same day that the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, because He is “Christ our Passover” sacrifice (1Co 5:7).

Therefore, Jesus prepared to publicly enter Jerusalem to force the issue of His death. The exact day that the Lord chose to enter Jerusalem fulfilled one of the most remarkable prophecies of the O.T., Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks.

Notice Daniel 9:24-26. Through Daniel, the Lord predicted that the time from Artaxerxes' decree, ordering the rebuilding of the temple (in 445 B.C.) until the coming of the Messiah would be 69 weeks of years or 483 Jewish years. That means that the Royal Entry would take place on the Ninth of Nisan, A.D., or April 6, A.D. 30. Our Lord entered Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, on that very day. This day was prophesied 400 years before this day and it took place on the exact day. God's word is inspired, inerrant, and infallible. It is True, Dependable, and Trustworthy. The Scriptures are God-given!

Read the Passage

All four Gospels record our Lord's Royal Entry into Jerusalem, but John's record is somewhat shorter than that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Remember that John wrote his gospel some forty years after the synoptic gospels. He did not record most of what had already been recorded, but he filled in the details that the other three gospel writers did not record. About ninety percent of what John wrote is new material, so John does not tell his readers much of what happened during the last week of our Lord's life on earth.

He does not tell:

- Now Jesus prearranged for two of His disciples to obtain the donkey and its colt.
- How the Pharisees insisted that Jesus silence those who were praising Him and that Jesus refused, saying that if He did so the rocks would cry out in praise.
- How our Lord wept over Jerusalem or how He cursed the barren fig tree.
- How He cleansed the temple or did miracles of healing.
- Of our Lord giving the Olivet Discourse with the prophecy concerning the last days.
- Of the agonizing prayer of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John limits his focus to three important incidents which occurred in the final week of our Lord's earthly ministry:

1. Mary's anointing of Jesus in preparation for His burial – John 12:1-11
2. Jesus' Royal Entry into Jerusalem – John 12:12-19
3. The request of the Greeks to meet with Jesus – John 12:20-26

As we look at this Parade for Jesus, I want us to see:

I. The Engineer

You need to understand that Jesus was in control of everything that happened during His Royal Entry. The book of Exodus required that every family have its own lamb to sacrifice. They were to bring the lamb four days before Passover and have the lamb inspected for defects or blemishes. While the lambs were being brought in and inspected, in rides Jesus, the Lamb of God, and He, too, is inspected and those who inspect Him declare, "I find no fault in Him!" It is estimated that during the time of Jesus, approximately 30,000 Jews normally lived in Jerusalem, but that during Passover, four to six times the population of this city gathered to observe Passover, camping all around Jerusalem. Rather than 30,000 people in Jerusalem, there were some 200,000 people and thousands of lambs.

Look at the Procession! Again, Jesus is engineering everything that happens! He's in control! Jesus is riding on an unbroken donkey's colt. That within itself is a minor miracle. Most folks who tried to ride an unbroken colt would have been thrown to the ground. I wonder if the young colt recognized that Jesus was the Lord of creation and considered it life's greatest privilege to serve the Son of God. Jesus is fulfilling the prophecy of Zech. 9:9; Ps.118:25-26 Thousands are around Him and behind Him shouting, "Blessed is the King of Israel who comes in the Name of the Lord!" They cut Palm branches and wave them before Him and lay some before Him on the road; others spread their cloaks before Him. Usually Kings would ride in great triumph on a strong white horse AFTER a great victory, but Jesus comes BEFORE His victory, riding not a war horse, but a donkey, the symbol of peace.

The waving of Palm branches started 200 years earlier. Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated the Jewish temple alter by slaying a pig on the alter, throwing its blood everywhere and even drinking some of its blood. Antiochus Epiphanes had brought shame on the Jewish Temple with his Syrian army. It was them that Judas Maccabeus, known as the Hammer, and the other Maccabees came in and drove out the Syrian army. In celebration the Jews waved Palm branches before Judas Maccabeus for overthrowing their oppressors. Now the Jews were oppressed by the Romans. They expected Jesus to overthrow the Romans. When they realized He was not going to do that, the crowd that shouted "Hail Him" on Sunday would shout "Nail Him" on Friday!

II. Hear the Cheer

Does it seem strange to you that Jesus accepts and even encourages this praise? This is completely different from anything He has done before. Up until now we find Him withdrawing from public notice. When the people wanted to make Him King before, He would slip away. When He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, He charged His disciples to say nothing about it. When He comes down from the Mount of Transfiguration, He warns those with Him not to tell anyone what they have seen. Now He doesn't discourage the praise. In fact, He encourages it and enters into the preparation for it. Why the change?

Up to this point, Jesus has said My hour or My time has not come. Notice John 2:4 (at the wedding), John 7:30 (They wanted to kill Him, but they could not lay hold of Him because His hour had not come); John 8:20 (again they wanted to kill Him, but His time had not come.)

-But from this point on, He says, "My time is come" He knew it was time for Him to give Himself as a sacrifice for sin – John 12:27; John 13:1; John 16:32; John 17:1.

I know something the Jews didn't know that day.

On that day Jesus rides in Jerusalem as a LAMB, willing to die as our sacrifice.

The day is soon coming when He will ride into Jerusalem, not on a donkey and not as a Lamb, but He will ride in on a strong white horse and the saints will follow Him and He will ride in as a LION to RULE!

Rev. 19:11-13

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more

And the morning breaks eternal bright and fair.

When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,

and the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there!

Ride on, King Jesus, Ride on!

The Pacific Garden Mission is located on State Street in Chicago. It was there that Billy Sunday was saved and later preached. Billy Sunday was a professional baseball player. As his fame as a baseball player began to grow, he began to drink. Soon he became an alcoholic. One night, as he was going back home from a bar, he passed by the Pacific Garden Mission.

He heard singing in the mission and sat on the steps to listen. There God spoke to his heart and there he was saved. Later, He preached at the mission. On the pulpit he placed a plaque which read, "Sir, we would see Jesus." It was a reminder to him every time he would stand to preach, he must preach Jesus, for only Jesus could meet the deepest need of man's heart.

Not long after I surrendered to preach, the pastor of my home church had those same words printed on his pulpit. It so spoke to my heart, that I put the words on the pulpit where I was pastoring: "Sir, we would see Jesus."

As we come to this passage, I want us to see:

I. The Request of the Greeks – John 12:20-21

That is still the cry of our world today. Sadly, in many of our churches, folks see everything but Jesus. They see:

1. Personalities

Sadly, all some churches see is the Pastor or the staff. Sometimes the pastor exalts himself: He is the hero of every story or illustration he uses; he wants you to be impressed with his knowledge or his education; he wants you to call him, "Doctor."

-One man said that there are so many doctors in our pulpit, you'd think God was sick.

2. Performances

-Music has become nothing more than "flesh on parade" in many churches. It's no longer about praise or worship, but performing.

-Some churches have 45 minutes of singing and ten minutes of preaching the word. Rather than the music and the preached word being used together to lift up Jesus and point the way to Jesus, there is competition between those singing and those preaching.

3. Programs

Nothing wrong with programs as long as they focus on Jesus.

Why did these Greeks want to see Jesus? No doubt they heard of His teaching, miracles, even Lazarus. ALSO, because they were dissatisfied with what they had given themselves to, which was philosophy; the search for answers to the great questions of the universe.

-I heard a good definition of philosophy: "Philosophy is like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there."

Let me give you an example: There was a poor old man who had nothing but one beautiful white horse. They said to the old man "You have nothing but that beautiful white horse.

But that horse is a good thing. Why don't you sell the horse so you can live well the rest of your life?" The old man said, "Whether the horse is a good thing or a bad thing, I cannot tell. I must wait and see." The next day the white horse ran away. Then they said to the old man, "Your horse ran away; that's a bad thing." The old man said, "Whether it is a good thing or a bad thing, I cannot tell. I must wait and see." The next day the white horse came back and a beautiful black horse followed him home. They said, "Old man, the white horse is back home and brought a black horse with him. That is good." The old man said, "Whether it's good or bad, I cannot tell. I must wait and see." The next day the old man's son tried to ride the black horse and it threw him and broke his arm and leg. They said, "Old man, the black horse was a bad thing. It broke your son's arm and leg." The old man said, "Whether it is a good thing or a bad thing, I cannot tell. I must wait and see." The next day a war broke out and all the young men had to go to war and all of them were killed. They said, "Old man, it's a good thing your son's arm and leg were broken or he would have been sent to war and he, too, would have been killed." The old man said, "Whether it's a good thing or not, I cannot tell. I must wait and see."

-It was that kind of thing the Greeks were involved in and it didn't meet the needs of their hearts. No wonder they said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

They asked Phillip to take them to Jesus. Phillip had a Greek name so they thought Phillip would help them. But Phillip didn't know what to do. They were Gentiles. He had heard Jesus say that He had come to the lost house of the Jews. Jesus did say, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold," but he didn't know if that meant Gentiles. So, he went to Andrew for advice.

Phillip and Andrew went and told Jesus.

I like Andrew. He was quiet, always in the background, but every time you see him in scripture, he is bringing somebody to Jesus. He brought his brother, Peter to Jesus; He brought the lad with his lunch to Jesus and Jesus fed 5,000 with the lunch; now, he brings these Greeks to Jesus.

There is no record that Jesus ever spoke to them, but I think He did. I can't see Jesus turning anyone away.

II. The Response to the Greeks – John 12:23-26

This was the turning point in Jesus' ministry. These Greeks showing up, wanting to see Jesus was a signal to Jesus. His hour had come.

-The Jews have rejected Jesus, their messiah. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

-Israel and the Jews had rejected Him; Now He must reject them and turn to the Gentiles.

-Israel's rejection had been foreseen in the O.T. In Romans 9:25-29.

-There will be a partial hardening in Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in – Rom. 11:1,5,25-26

III. The Reward of the Greeks – John 12:23-26

What does it mean that "the Son of Man should be glorified?"

I use to think that Jesus being glorified meant that Jesus was ascended into heaven, seated at the right side of the Father on His throne, with the light of glory coming from His person. All of that is true, but that is not what Jesus meant when He said that He should be glorified.

Jesus being glorified meant His death.

Then He talks about a grain of wheat. If you put a grain of wheat up somewhere, it remains one seed. But if you plant it, it produces fruit. It dies so it can bring forth life.

-Jesus could have stayed alive, but there would have been no life. There is no life without the cross.

Someone has calculated that if you plant one wheat seed, take the crop and plant all the seed from that crop, plant all the seed from the next crop, ect., that it would take only fourteen years for the whole land space of the earth to be filled.

-Jesus dying, being planted, rising to life will bring life to Jew and Gentile.

-Notice: Jesus is talking about planting seed; not burying seed. A young man visited an old missionary in the deepest parts of the jungle. He said to the missionary, "You have really buried yourself out here in this mission field." The missionary said, "No, I have not buried myself here, I have planted myself here."

The same is true of us as we follow Christ – John 11:25-26

-The only Jesus folks will see is the Jesus in us. People need to see Jesus in our Attitude, Actions, Accomplishments, Aims, Attire, and Appetites.

- "Sir, we would see Jesus!" Let others see Jesus in you. Then we will hear Him say, "Well Done!"

Jesus' Thoughts on the Way to the Cross

Psalm 118:24; John 12: 27-32

Have you ever wondered what was on the heart and mind of our Lord the last week before the cross?

-Jesus came to this earth to die for the sins of mankind. He did not come primarily to work miracles or to teach the truths of God or to be an Example to us in how to live life. He came to die.

The most quoted Psalm in the N.T. is Psalm 118. It is also the psalm that was read before and during Passover year after year. The whole Psalm speaks of Christ our passover and speaks of His sacrifice on the cross.

-Look at one verse in Psalm 118. (Ps. 118:24). We use this verse to praise God for the days we live, but that verse speaks of one day; the day Jesus was glorified when He died on the cross.

What was our Lord's thoughts those last days before He was hung on the cross?

I. His Soul was Troubled Before the Cross – John 12:27a

When Jesus speaks of His "Soul", He speaks of His inner – self. The deep inward seat of His feelings referring to His full humanity.

-He wants us to know that His soul was not at peace. Inwardly, he was disturbed over what was ahead.

-I don't know about you; but the idea of Jesus being "troubled of soul" doesn't fit well with my usual concept of Jesus.

-On most occasions Jesus was bold and courageous and fearless.

● But at the last supper, He was troubled in His spirit – John 13:21

● In Gethsemane His soul was sorrowful – Mark 14:32-34

Why was His soul troubled?

● Because of His strong, natural dislike for the cross. The cross was an unspeakably cruel and humiliating thing. "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." Jesus would not have been human if He didn't recoil at the thought of hanging on a cross.

I believe there were some things more dreadful than the physical agony and humiliation of a death on the cross that was in his mind.

- He was going to become sin for us – Him that knew no sin.
- He would experience the full outpouring of His Father's wrath on our behalf, because the Lord would lay on Him the iniquity of us all. Who can imagine the crushing guilt He felt as He paid the full price for our sins?
- For the first and only time He would experience separation from His Father. The Father cannot tolerate sin in His presence. For those who die in their sins, the greatest agony will be separation from the Father.

II. Our Lord's Resolve Regarding the Cross – John 12:27b

Jesus prayed something like this in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Yet He was resolved to obey the will of God.

-Notice what He said: "For this purpose I came into the world."

III. Our Lord's Confidence Through the Cross – John 12:28-30

Jesus was confident that His death on the cross would accomplish what the Father wanted it to accomplish: The Father would be glorified and sins would be justified.

This is the third time that the Father honored His Son by speaking audibly concerning His Son-at the beginning of His ministry, in the middle of His ministry, and at the end of His earthly ministry.

A. The Father witnessed concerning the Purity of His Son – Matt. 3:16-17

The Father declared publicly, "In Him I am well pleased. He is my beloved, sinless, Pure Son.

B. The Father witnessed concerning the Preaching of His Son – Matt 17:5

This is my beloved Son; Hear ye Him...Listen to my Son!

- He spoke of the necessity of being born again
- He declared that keeping the Laws and traditions of men would not commend them to God.
- He warned of eternal judgment for those without Christ

C. The Father witnessed concerning the Passion of His Son – John 12:28

Our Lord's death on the cross would glorify the Father and exalt the Son as the supreme head of His redeemed people.

How did Jesus glorify the Father through His death on the cross?

1. The cross demonstrates the Father's holiness because it shows that sin is contrary to His holy character.
2. The cross demonstrates the Father's justice because it shows the Father's just character demands that sin be paid for.
3. The cross demonstrates the Father's wrath because it pleased the Lord to bruise His Son – Isa. 53:10
4. The cross demonstrates the Father's love because He was willing to give His Son to die on our behalf.
5. The cross demonstrates the Father's mercy because on the cross His son bore our griefs and sorrows so we would not perish.
6. The cross demonstrates the Father's amazing grace because as many as receive Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God.
7. The cross glorifies the Father because it will resound in His eternal praise.

IV. Our Lord's Expectation After the Cross – John 12:31-32

Jesus died to pay the redemptive price for our sins, but in addition to that, to defeat Satan once and for all – 1 John 3:8b

-Satan will be defeated and "cast out." The tense of the verb "cast out" indicates that Satan will gradually be cast out. It will be in four stages:

Stage 1: At the cross of Calvary, Satan's grip on the world was finally broken – Col. 2:15

Stage 2: Satan will be cast out of Heaven. This hasn't happened yet. Satan still has access to Heaven to accuse the brethren. Rev. 12:10

Stage 3: Satan will be cast into a bottomless pit for 1,000 years while Christ rules and reigns on this planet during His Millennial Kingdom – Rev. 20:2-3

Stage 4: Satan will be cast into the Lake of Fire forever and that will be the end of him. Glory! Rev. 20:10

Because of Jesus Christ, Satan is a dead spirit walking – I John 3:8

Research was done a few years ago concerning people who had been bitten by dead snakes. The reason for the research came after admitting a patient who was bitten by a snake while gardening. The man had cut off a rattlesnake's head with his shovel. When he bent down to pick up the snake's head, it bit him.

Research showed that 15 percent of those being admitted for snakebites were bitten by a dead snake. That was a surprise because most people did know dead snakes still bite. Snakes have a reflex action that continues even after being killed. For this reason, a decapitated rattlesnake can still bite up to an hour after death.

That information can help protect us from venomous snakes. There is a spiritual application as well. The Bible calls Satan a serpent. He is still dangerous even though Christ has delivered a fatal blow.

John points out a spiritual attraction of Christ – John 12:32-33

Joh 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Joh 12:33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Our Lord draws us with His love – I John 4:19

1Jo 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

Jesus warns us not to waste our opportunity to be saved – John 12:35-36

Joh 12:35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

Joh 12:36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

The November, 2002, issue of Guide Post Magazine shared the story of God's guidance and protection of Major Michael Halt. Halt's battalion had been ordered to cross the Kuwaiti border as part of Operation Desert Storm. The Major was second in command of 130 Marines.

The unit had already been under heavy artillery fire and now faced the possibility of oil fires and land mines. Thousands of Iraqi troops waited just beyond the Kuwaiti border.

The Major prayed, "Dear God, help me to lead my troops wisely. Watch over us and keep us safe." As the Marines prepared to cross the next morning, they wrote letters to loved ones in case they were killed in battle.

The next morning before dawn, the order was given to move out. The skies were clear and the men began to advance toward the border. As they advanced, it began to sprinkle and then it began to rain cats and dogs. The rain came down so hard and fast that the men could not make out the desert landscape ahead of them, hindering the advance. This went on for days.

The men were not only concerned about the enemy ahead, but now the weather seemed to be against them. Major Halt prayed, "Father, please make this rain stop and protect us." The rain continued to pound the unit until they finally neared the border of Kuwait. At the border, the battalion halted while the enemy waited on the other side.

On the day of the invasion, the men awoke to clear skies and sunshine. As they closed in on the border, they couldn't believe the sight before them. The torrential rains had washed away the sand to reveal metal disks planted all across their path. It was an Iraqi mine field. God protected these men and gave them direction by using the storms. By the way, He may use your storms and trials to give you direction too. Trust His leading day by day, especially in the times of trouble.

A Servant Moment

John 13:1-17

These verses are so amazing that there is no way we can deal with them in one message – or in a hundred messages.

-I am not going to preach a hundred messages on this passage, but I do want to preach three messages on them.

- In this first message, I want us to see the Example that Jesus left for us to follow.
- In another message, I want us to see that Jesus wants to wash our feet.
- And in another message, I want us to see that Jesus wants us to wash the feet of others.

Here we find Jesus in a servant moment.

- He is less than 24 hours from the cross. In Luke 22:7-8, we are told that Jesus sent Peter and John to make the upper room ready for Jesus and His disciples.
- The disciples were excited because they knew Jesus was about to set up His kingdom. They were interested in what part they would play in His kingdom and what their position would be. They began arguing before they got to the Upper Room about who would be the greatest in His kingdom and the arguing continued as they reclined around the table.

- While the famous painting of the Last Supper by Leonardo DaVinci is a beautiful work of art, it fails to convey an accurate image of the scene that night.
- There were no table and chairs to eat the Supper on. As was customary, the disciples were reclining around a U -Shaped table, propping themselves up on one arm while eating with the others.
- I believe that when the disciples entered this Upper Room, they were all intent on sitting in the places of honor – at the Lord's right and left hand. I can almost see them pushing and shoving their way into the room, hurrying past the basin of water, where a servant normally would have been present to wash the feet of the guest as they entered, in preparation for the meal.
- As they continued to argue about who would be the greatest, it was obvious that none of them was going to do the dirty job, Jesus rose from the table, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded himself and began to wash the disciple's feet.
- Note John 13:14-15

Joh 13:14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

Joh 13:15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

To be a servant is just like Jesus. When God designed to reach the world for Himself, He designed to do so through a servant.

- Phil. 2:5-10 What does Paul mean when he says, "Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus?" Well, he is not referring to the mental capacities of the lord Jesus. He is not talking about intelligence. He is talking about our Lord's attitude, His Spirit, His demeanor, His approach to life.

- What was our Lord's approach to life? Others. Others. Others! Our attitude toward others will determine how we see things and it will also determine our usefulness to the Lord as we walk through this life.

Every day and in every way, we are to have the mind, the spirit, the attitude of Christ toward others. Our Sovereign became a Servant!

We are to be a servant just like Him!

- You say, "If I really became a servant, folks would take advantage of me! They would run over me! It wouldn't be easy." It never has been and it never will be. But before we will ever be anything for God, we must learn to become servants.

Let me share with you four issues servants face:

I. Ego

One of the first things that Jesus says we must do if we are going to follow Him, to be one of His disciples, is to deny himself – Matt. 16:24. It is the same word as Ego. It means to say "No" to our Ego.

-Down inside of every one of us is someone who wants to rise up and push self-first; even in front of the Lord!

-In his book on leadership, James Autry says ego means Edging God Out. It is wanting my way, so I edge God out.

But did you know that a true servant has no ego. A true servant has no right to say, "I don't want to." "I'm not going to." "I will not."

-Ego says "I'm going to get my way." And when you have that spirit you end up saying things and doing things, or not doing things just to boost your ego.

Then James Autry said, "We need to move from Edging God out to Exalting God only!"

-We move from the place of saying, "If I don't get my way, but it exalts God, I'm for it!"

-Sometimes we get sour or bitter or resentful because we don't get our way and that means Ego is on the throne of our life.

Several years ago, a well – known preacher was to preach at the Mississippi State Convention. Something came up at the last minute and he could not come. The Leaders began to wonder who they could get to replace him at that late date. Finally, someone said, "Why don't we ask Frank Pollard?" Frank Pollard had been pastor of FBC Jackson for over 10 years. It was the largest church in the state. When the leaders asked him if he would fill the preaching slot, they told him that they had asked someone else to preach but he had to cancel, but wondered if he would fill in now. With a sweet, gracious spirit, he said, "I will be glad to." Then someone close to Dr. Pollard told the convention leaders that Dr. Pollard had never been asked to do anything during the convention - not preach or serve on a committee or even lead in silent prayer! Here was the pastor of the largest church in the state; his church consistently gave more to the cooperative program than any other church in the state and he was never asked to do anything. Yet, there was never one word of complaint about anything, but when asked to serve, he graciously said that he would be glad to.

-He had moved to Exalting God only. What about your Ego?

II. Presto

Presto means immediately, to get with it, to act now.

-When a servant is asked to do something by the master, it means to do it now.

Most of us are like our kids when we ask them to do something. They say, "Why?" "I will later." "After a while."

-When a master asks a servant to do something, there is to be no discussion. Just do it!

We don't live in a Presto world. God says, "You just fool around and you are going to miss an opportunity."

Mary anoints our Lord's feet with perfume and the first thing we hear is a complaint from Judas, "Why this waste?" Jesus said, "Let her alone. Wherever the Gospel is preached, what she has done for me will be told."

-In Luke 24, we find the women going to the tomb to anoint the body of their Lord. Too late now to anoint Him BEFORE His death.

III. Gusto

If we are going to do something for Christ, we need to do it with Gusto!

-Real passion ought to drive us to do what we do for our Lord. No half-hearted service for our Lord! Throw your heart and soul into it! Do it with all that is within you!

-Too often we just go through the motions. No zeal! No enthusiasm! It was Jesus who spoke to the church at Laodicea and said, "You are neither hot nor cold. You make me sick. I will spew you out of my mouth."

What a difference it would make if we would serve the Lord with Gusto. The Lord of Heaven wants us to get stirred up for Him!

IV. Memo

Memo, like, did you get the memo? Did you get the latest word?

In John 21, our Lord is about to ascend to Heaven. He meets with a group of His disciples. He tells Peter that if he loves Him, to feed His sheep.

-Peter starts looking at John. Then he says, "Well, Lord, what do you want John to do?" Jesus basically says, "That's none of your business. You just do what I've asked you to do."

-The real issue is, "I want you to follow me. Do whatever I ask you to do."

Mary, the mother of Jesus, learned this truth when she told the servants at the wedding after they had run out of wine, "Whatever He says to you, do it!"

-He says, "Fill the water pots." "Well, that's not going to solve the problem. They need wine; not water." "Just fill them up. Do it."

Jesus is our Great Leader and Lord. What He asks you to do may not make sense to you, but do it!

Deal with your Ego. Obey Him Presto. Do it with Gusto. Follow the Memo.

We Need Our Feet Washed!

John 13:1-12

Within the span of five days, the two most important foot washings in the history of the world took place.

-One on Saturday before Palm Sunday, the Saturday before Jesus rode into Jerusalem to present himself as King, He went into the house of Mary, who washed His feet with costly perfume. She did not use water on His feet, because washing with water symbolized the cleansing of sin, and Jesus had no sin. Rather, she anointed His feet with spikenard, which spoke of deity, royalty, and Kingship.

-Five days later, in the Upper Room, Jesus would wash the dirt off of His disciple's feet with water, which spoke of cleansing.

John gives a very deliberate and detailed account of what happened in the Upper Room. It is a beautiful picture of Phil. 2:5-8.

- He riseth from supper (John 13:4) Just as Jesus rose from the Last Supper, He rose in eternity past, from the banquet that He enjoyed with the Father and Spirit continually, to willingly take upon Himself the form of a man. It wasn't that a committee of three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – voted who would go, and Jesus lost two to one. No, in the council of eternity past, the Son said, "I choose to leave the intimacy of this heavenly banquet to invade time and space on earth in order to redeem mankind."

- Laying aside His garments (John 13:4) Just as Jesus laid aside His earthly garments, Phil. 2 says He laid aside His garments of glory to come and dwell among us.

- He took a towel (John 13:4) Just as Jesus wrapped Himself in a towel, so He wrapped His divinity in human flesh. He was still God, totally God, always God – yet wrapped in the towel of humanity.

- He girded Himself (John 13:4) The word "towel" used here refers to a linen towel. Linen speaks of righteousness and is a picture of perfection. Jesus wraps Himself in the righteous towel of human flesh, for He was like us; yet, without sin (Heb. 4:15).

- He poured water into a basin (John 13:5) Water speaks of the word. Paul says we are washed by the water of the word. So, wrapped in the towel of human frailty, Jesus pours out His word to us. He tells us who God is. He tells us how to live. He becomes flesh and dwells among us.

- He washes the disciple's feet (John 13:5). This model is not a picture of salvation, but of sanctification; not of conversion, but of

confession and cleansing (I John 1:9). As I walk through this world, I get dirty feet. And here's Jesus, who not only pours out the truth of purity, but then makes application for you and me as He washes us continually.

- He wipes them with the towel. (John 13:5). He is going to complete the job; he'll not leave us all wet. He'll dry our feet and see us through (Phil. 1:6). Seven things He does!

John 13:5 lets us know that Jesus had already "begun" to wash the disciple's feet.

Joh 13:5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

-In our previous study I told you that the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of our Lord. All twelve disciples had walked past the basin and water. Now Jesus picks up the basin and towel and tells them it is because of their Ego that they would not humble themselves to serve others.

Let me share several things with you that will show you that Jesus wishes to wash our feet as well as the disciple's feet on that day.

I. Our Lord's Refreshing

Why would Jesus get up and wash his disciple's feet? What would motivate Him to do this?

-Well, it needed to be done and no one else would do it and He wanted to teach them a lesson on humility and servanthood, but there was a deeper motivation.

He loved them perfectly, unconditionally, without limit, eternally, to the end – John 13:1

-Jesus knows that in less than 24 hours He will be on the cross, dying for their sins. Yet, His heart is still overcome with love for His disciples.

Let me point out two important words so you can fully understand what Jesus is doing. Notice John 13:10-11

-There are two Greek words here; both translated "wash" in the KJV, but they are very different.

- "He that is washed" The word "washed" here is the Greek word "LOUD" and should be translated "bath". It means to bath all.
- The other word wash ("needs only to wash his feet") is the Greek word "nipto" and means "to rinse certain spots". It speaks of communion or fellowship with the Lord.

All of us need a spiritual washing, a bath all over, because all of us are dirty with sin.

-All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Isaiah 1:18 says that though our sins be as scarlet, they can be washed in the blood of Jesus and we will be washed as white as snow.

-Only the blood of Jesus can wash our sins away.

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus;

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh! Precious is the flow that washes white as snow;

No other fount I know, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

But we live and walk through a dirty, defiled world. Even though we are saved and washed as white as snow, there are areas of our life that get dirty and need to be cleansed. Sometimes our thought life gets defiled and needs to be cleansed. Sometimes our hands and feet get soiled and need to be cleansed.

-James 1:27 says that we are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

-Psalm 119:9 "How shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed to the word of God."

Some folks believe if they sin after they are saved, they need to be saved again. If that were the case, none of us could stay saved many minutes a day.

-Notice 13:8 Jesus said, "If I don't wash you, you will have no part WITH me." He didn't say

that you will have no part IN me, Salvation, but you will have no part WITH me; no fellowship; no participation, no sharing with me, no communion with me.

You can measure your own spirituality by asking how long it takes you to confess your sin and get back in fellowship after being aware you have sinned.

-Carnal Christian let their sins stack up; those who walk in the spirit confess their sins as soon as they become aware of them. They keep short accounts with God.

II. Peter's Reaction

It would be safe to assume that Jesus had washed the feet of at least a few of the disciples before He came to Peter.

Can you imagine what must have been going on in Peter's mind as the Lord washed the feet of His disciples?

- He would have watched and thought to himself, "How could John sit there and let the Lord stoop down and perform this menial task toward him?"

- And now look! He's washing Matthew's feet. Matthew was a horrible sinner – a tax collector! Doesn't Matthew realize who this is who is washing his feet?

- And oh no! Even Andrew, my own brother! No one knows how unworthy Andrew is better than I do! I'd never allow the Lord to do to me what Andrew is allowing Him to do to him!

- John 13:6 "Then He came to Simon Peter" Peter responded, "Lord, You? My feet you are going to wash!"

III. Peter's Resistance – John 13:6-8

Peter draws his feet up under him and says, "You shall never wash my feet."

-Here is a disciple saying to his master, "You shall never minister to me." Peter didn't deny his need to have his feet washed, but he didn't want Jesus to humble Himself to wash his feet.

This is equivalent of irreverence. After all, the first condition of discipleship is obedience. Peter is simply refusing to submit to the Lord. Obedience is the proof of love.

Peter's heart may have been right, but his head was quite wrong.

Think about it: None of the disciples would humble themselves to wash feet. Well, they were all humbled now, weren't they?

-You see, it takes humility and grace to serve others, but it takes humility and grace to allow others to serve you – even Jesus!

IV. Peter's Receptiveness – John 13:9-12

The image here is crystal clear for the believer. When we receive Jesus as our personal Savior, he forever washes us from our sins from head to toe. However, as we walk through life, we tend to fall into sin and we need cleansing...not for the entire person since that was accomplished when we were saved and can never be repeated, but just that particular stain

we gather when we sin in our daily walk.

-I John 1:7-2:2 You see, Jesus is still washing feet!

So many of us are like Simon Peter. When the Lord convicts us of sin in our lives as believers and wants to cleanse us of sin, rather than confessing our sin to the Lord and asking for His forgiveness of those sins, like Peter, we pull our dirty feet under us and say, "No, I don't want you washing my feet."

-If all of our Lord's disciples needed to have their feet washed, cleansed, what makes you think you don't need yours cleaned.

-The secret to true spiritual joy is the practice of instant confession of sins and failures before the throne of grace.

-Ps. 32:5

Psa 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Wash One Another's Feet!

John 13:12-17

Before reading the passage:

Jesus knew that His time had come. His death on the cross was less than 24 hours away. He would humble Himself and submit to his Father's will and die on the cross for the sins of mankind.

-While Jesus was in his attitude of humiliation, His disciples were arguing over which of them would be the greatest in His kingdom.

What a contrast! Our Lord gives a living example of servanthood when He washes His disciple's feet, and they in their pride, seek to exalt themselves!

Without a word, Jesus gets up from His reclining position at the table, takes off His outer garment, girds a towel around Him like a servant, takes a basin of water, and begins to wash and dry the feet of His disciples.

-After He has washed every disciple's feet, including the feet of Judas even though He knew that he was going to betray Him into the enemy's hands that night, went back to His place at the table, sat down and asked them an important question.

Read the passage:

Jesus asked, "Do you know what I have done to you or for you?" They didn't have a clue. They knew WHAT He had done, but they didn't know WHY he had done it.

Have you ever tried to wash somebody's feet at the end of a long, hard, hot day? How about washing somebody's feet that's covered with grime? Have you ever put your face down next to an ingrown toenail? It's not as much fun as you think it is. Some feet really stink!

-There are some churches, the Freewill Baptist are among them, that will have foot washings as a part of their regular practice. Some churches even call it a third ordinance – Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the washing of feet.

-They will say, "On Thursday night we're going to have a foot washing ceremony. So, everybody come out on Thursday night." Only what do they do before they come to church? They wash their feet. Why? Because you don't want anybody touching your dirty feet! But that misses the point. The only feet that need washing are dirty feet. Just to have someone messing around with your feet is embarrassing.

Jesus never meant for this to become an ordinance. He did not say, "Do WHAT I do"; He said, "Do AS I do." Jesus was not saying, "Copy me;" but, "Let this mind be in you." Have a servant spirit.

I. Jesus Gave Us an Example – John 13:15

The Leader Goes First.

-Jesus would never ask us to do anything that He would not do. That's what a leader does. First, he does it himself. Then, he explains it. Then, you do it. But always, the leader goes first.

-Lest we misunderstand, He spells it out for us – John 13:16. "I did it for you. And if I did it for you, you can do it for someone else." In that one verse you have the key to the Christian life: DO AS Jesus did!

Peter said, "Lord, you are not going to wash my feet. What you are doing is demeaning. That's slaves' work. That's not your job. That's beneath you."

-What bothered them was not WHAT He was doing, but that HE was doing it.

-Foot washing was OK as long as a person of lower class did it.

Remember what the disciples were arguing about? Who was the greatest? Well, Jesus was the Greatest – Matt. 23:11-12

Two lessons Jesus wanted to teach His disciples:

A. The Lesson of Humility

There are many paradoxes in the Christian life:

- The way to life is through death.
- The way to get is to give.
- The way to greatness is by becoming a servant to others.
- The way to greatness is through humility.

Being a servant doesn't start with what you do, being a servant starts with the attitude of the heart. It's not an action, it's an attitude.

-The same action can be the action of a servant or the action of a proud person.

- You can visit a nursing home with a servant's heart or you can do it out of a sense of obligation.

● You can bake bread because you want to serve somebody, or you can do it because you want to win favor and have them praise you.

- You can give money because you really want to serve, or you can give money in order to gain favor with someone.

-What makes the difference is the motivation inside the human heart.

-Gal. 5:13 "By love serve one another."

Humility is one part of the lesson the Lord wants us to learn.

-If the only-begotten Son of God, the King of Kings, did not think it beneath Him to do the humblest work of a servant, there is nothing which His disciples should think themselves too good to do.

-No sin is so offensive to God as pride.

- I Peter 5:5 "Be clothed with humility."

- Luke 18:14 "Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

-Big shots refuse to humble themselves. They think certain task and certain people are beneath them. They think they are too good to do some things. That's why real humility is so rare.

1. It is the humble who are most willing to serve.

Of course, the proud will serve if the applause is loud enough. They will serve if they get the proper recognition. They will serve if the task is not beneath them. But the humble will serve unconditionally.

2. The humble remembers that what he does for others, he does for his Lord." Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these...you have done it unto ME."

B. The Lesson of Love

The other lesson is to manifest love. We ought to love others so much that we delight in doing kindnesses to others, even in little things. We ought to count it a pleasure to lessen someone's sorrow and multiply their joy, even if it means self-sacrifice and self-denial for us.

– "A really great man is one who makes others feel great."

II. Jesus Gave Us an Exhortation – John 13:15

"Do as I have done unto you." Remember that when our Lord washes our feet, it is for cleansing. We often get dirty in this dirty world and sometimes the Lord uses other Christians to confront a brother about sin in their life.

-Gal. 6:1-2

Did you notice that Jesus didn't give a lecture on dirty feet? He simply got down on His hands and knees and washed them.

-If you are willing to wash feet, then keep your mouth closed when you see dirty feet. When I see dirty feet, I can either talk about the dirty feet, which is called judging, or I can involve myself in that person's life by tending the situation on my knees in humility through intercession. Jesus didn't simply point out the dirt on the feet of the disciples, He did something about it.

When we wash our brother's feet:

1. Make sure the water is not too hot

It's painful to be confronted with our sin. Don't add to the discomfort by being judgmental or holier than thou. It should be done in love and a spirit of meekness. ALWAYS SEEK TO BE REDEMPTIVE.

2. Make sure your own feet are clean.

Take the beam out of your eye before trying to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Again, Always SEEK TO BE REDEMPTIVE.

3. Be ready to submit your own feet to the washing process.

None of us are infallible. We all fall. Use kindness when you wash your brother's feet and he will be more likely to use kindness when he washes your feet.

-We may fall into spiritual snares and not be aware of it until some kind brother opens our eyes

to it. What a blessing to have someone who cares for us enough to wash our feet.

-Proverbs 27:17

How did Jesus do it?

1. He saw a need and moved to meet it.

2. He took the initiative and didn't wait for an invitation.

3. He took off His uniform of greatness and got down on his knees.

4. He didn't announce what he was going to do. He didn't stand up and say, "Well, men, I'm Jesus and now I'm going to wash your feet. You are about to see love in action. Watch me. Take notes. A few photos will be allowed." No, he just quietly got up and washed feet. It wasn't something for all Jerusalem to see. He kept it within their small circle.

5. He didn't just serve the ones he preferred.

It might have been easy to wash John's feet. After all, John was the "Beloved Disciple." Yet, John and his brother James were known as the "Sons of Thunder." And what about Simon Peter? He would deny Him three times before the sun came up good. Then there was Thomas. He would doubt the word of others and refuse to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. Then there was Judas who sold the Lord to the enemies for 30 pieces of silver. He treated them all the same.

6. He didn't wait for a thank you and didn't get one either.

That's what a servant does. He sees a need and moves to meet it. Remember, it all starts with the heart.

III. Jesus Gave Us an Expectation – John 13:17

“Happy or Blessed if you know these things AND DO THEM.”

-If we follow the example of our Lord, we will always be blessed. By the same token, if we do not follow His example when we should, we will experience the opposite results.

Bottom Line: If you've never been washed by Christ, you're dirty. No matter how pleasant you may look on the outside, you need a complete washing in the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Judas was there that day and Jesus washed his feet, but it did no good because his heart had never been washed.

Have you ever had a spiritual bath? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb of God?

Judas Iscariot: So Close; Yet, So Far Away

John 13:16-30

It would be difficult to think of a more notorious biblical character than Judas Iscariot; except the Devil himself.

-Even people who never attend church know the name Judas Iscariot. No one would think of naming their son, Judas. They might name their dog, Judas, but never their son!

-Judas betrayed and sold out, not only a man or a country, but the precious Son of God. The Bible calls him the son of perdition, a devil, a thief, and the traitor!

His life started out so promising. The name “Judas” means “praise unto God”. How his parents must have wanted him to live up to that name!

-The name Judas was a popular name in Israel. One of our Lord's half-brothers was named Judas, but after Judas Iscariot betrayed the Lord, he changed his name to Jude, as did most of the others who were named Judas in that day. What Judas did, destroyed the value of that name forever.

-The words of Jesus tell the tragic story when He said, “It would have been better for Judas if he had never been born.”

The life of Judas Iscariot is a real tragedy when you consider:

1. The opportunities he had

He was one of eleven other men who were chosen by our Lord to follow Him and to be with Him during His earthly ministry: To hear Him teach, To be in His presence, To see His power in working miracles; yet, with all those opportunities, he betrayed our Lord.

2. The opportunities he missed

For at least two and a half years, he was with the very Person of salvation; yet, he missed being saved! No wonder Paul said for us to “examine yourselves,” for if it were possible for one to follow Jesus while he was on earth and still remain lost, it is possible that there are folks in church every Sunday with their names on the church rolls who have never been saved.

As we study this man, Judas Iscariot, I want us to see:

I. His Discloser

John sprinkles the truth about Judas throughout his gospel. Notice John 6:64, 70-71;

John 13:11

If Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray Him, why did He choose him? Why would Jesus invite a man into the company of disciples who would become a traitor?

1. To Fulfill Scripture – John 13:18

What scripture? Ps. 41:9; John 55:12-14 David is referring to his best counselor, Ahithophel, who turned traitor and joined Absalom's rebellion against his father, David. Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandpa and he was angry with David for what he had done to his granddaughter.

When Absalom refused Ahithophel's advice to strike David quickly, he knew David would regroup, gather more men to battle, and he would be found out as a traitor. Like Judas, Ahithophel went out and hung himself.

-Another scripture that must be fulfilled was Zach. 11:12-13 where we are told that the Messiah would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.

2.To Prove His Deity – John 13:19

3.To Serve as a warning to religious folks

4.Our Lord's choosing Judas, knowing that he would betray Him, was a wonderful act of grace.

Jesus regarded Judas as a potential follower. Jesus called him to discipleship just as sincerely as He did Peter, James, John and the others. If Judas had responded to the love and teachings of Jesus, he could have been a pillar in the early church.

-The question of why Jesus chose Judas as His disciple is no more difficult to answer than this question: "Why did He choose us?" When the Lord first looked upon us, did He see pure people? No. Like Judas, we possessed a fallen nature that wanted to seize for itself glory that rightly belonged to God. Jesus chose Judas, and us, to be His followers, not because we had anything to offer Him, but because He had everything to offer us. It was all because of His grace.

How did Satan get Judas to work for him? The same way he gets us to do his bidding. Notice John 13:2, 27 We should not be ignorant of Satan's devices. He has the power to put things into our hearts and minds and he also has the power to take things out of our hearts and minds. Satan is still going to and fro in the earth, seeking whom he may devour.

-First, he wants to enter into our minds. He knocks at the door of our mind and asks permission to come in. Then, once admitted, he takes complete control and rules the whole inward man.

-If we allow Satan to sow wicked thoughts in our minds, we will soon find within our heart a crop of wicked habits.

-Our only safety against Satan is to resist him at the earliest moment. He has no power over our God who is stronger than he. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

You may think that the last place that Satan would want to join would be where the people of God are. To the contrary, it is the first place. If Satan is going to overthrow the work of Christ, his best chance is to infiltrate the people of God and sow seeds of discord among the believers.

-In fact, Satan will put his man in the place of leadership if he can. Among the Twelve there was only one office, that of treasurer, and it was held by Judas. The main quality people want in someone who handles their money is honesty, and the disciples thought they had found it in Judas. They trusted him to the end.

II. His Decision

Life is made up of decisions. The greatest decision in life is, "What will you do with Jesus?"

-Judas was in the presence of Jesus, but the presence of Jesus was never in him. Judas sold Jesus, but behind the Traitor was the Tempter. He listened to the voice of Jesus, but he also listened to the voice of Satan.

-Though Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him, He never gave it away to His disciples. If he had, the eleven would most likely have killed Judas on the spot as Peter tried to kill Malicious in the Garden.

-Jesus loved Judas like He did the rest of the Twelve and expressed the same love to him. He reached out to Judas over and over again and wanted him to be saved. Everything that had happened in the Upper Room was one last effort to reach Judas: He washed his feet, quoted O.T. Prophecies, even the seating arrangement around the table when Jesus placed Judas on His right side, the place of honor.

-But Judas would sell Jesus to His enemies for 30 pieces of silver. Would you do that? Never! But some have sold Him for much less: For Pleasure, Position, Popularity, Possessions, Pride.

SOLD

It may not be for silver, it may not be for gold,
But yet by tens of thousands the Prince of Life is sold,
Sold for a godless friendship, sold for a selfish aim,
Sold for a fleeting trifle, sold for an empty name.

Sold at the shrine of fortune, sold in pleasure's bower,
Sold for your awful bargain none but God's eyes can see.
Ponder my soul the question, shall He be sold by thee?

Sold! Oh God, what a moment! Stilled is conscience voice;
Sold! And a weeping angel records the fatal choice.

No wonder Jesus said that it would have been better for him if he had never been born.

Hypocrites are hard to spot. When Jesus said, "One of you will betray Me," the Bible says that the disciples began to look – not at Judas, but at one another.

-Imagine, after three years of living with Judas, no one suspected him. How easy it is to hide behind religion and religious activity and never really be saved.

I hear folks say, "I can't stomach the church because of its hypocrites."

-Listen, let's put away our excuses. Until Jesus returns, the church will always be contaminated with hypocrisy. Jesus said so. We should be neither surprised nor repelled by it. What we should do is examine our own hearts.

-If a hypocrite is standing between you and Christ, then that person is closer to the Lord than you are.

The other Gospels tell us that ALL of the disciples, including Judas, asked, "Is it I?" I think Judas asked along with the others just to cover himself.

-Simon Peter really wanted to know who it was, so in John 13:24, he caught John's eye some way and "beckoned" to John.

John was on our Lord's left side, laying his head next to Jesus' heart, and Peter nodded to John or signaled to John or gave John the eye and said, "ASK Jesus who it is!"

-Without giving a name, Jesus said that it was the one to whom He was about to give the sop. Jesus dipped the bread in sop and gave it to Judas; then quietly said to him, "That which you are about to do, do quickly." And Judas leaves to set the plan in motion.

Even when Judas leaves, the disciples don't put two and two together. They think that since he has the money bag, Jesus must have sent him for provisions.

III. His Doom

A. His Sin Deceived Him – Matt. 27:3-4

The silver, once desired and now, possessed, turned to hot coals in his hands. He tried to cast them from him but they seemed as a viper that had fastened upon him. Those who gave him the money sneered and mocked him...Satan will do the same one day to all those who go to hell for selling Jesus at any price.

B. His Sin Destroyed Him – Matt. 27:5; Acts 1:18

Thirty Pieces of Silver

Thirty pieces of silver for the Lord of life they gave,
Thirty pieces of silver, only the price of a slave:
But this was the priestly value of the Holy One of God;
And they weighed it out in the temple, the price of His precious blood.

Thirty pieces of silver laid in Iscariot's hand,
Thirty pieces of silver and the aid of an armed band;
Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter brought the humble Son of God,
At midnight from the Garden, where His sweat had been like blood.

Thirty pieces of silver burn on the traitor's brain,
Thirty pieces of silver – Oh, it is hellish gain:
"I have sinned and betrayed the guiltless," he cried with a lowered breath,
As he threw them down in the Temple and rushed to a madman's death.

C. His Sin Damned Him

What will Jesus say to Judas at the Judgment?

-“Judas, why did you refuse me? I loved you. I tried to show you that I Am the way. I was willing to die for your sins so you could be forgiven. It didn't have to be this way, but you have made your choice. This is what you have chosen for me to say, “Depart from me into everlasting torment and punishment. You will pay eternally for your own sins.”

-What will you hear Him say? He will either say, “Enter, ye, into the joy of your Lord, or Depart from me into everlasting fire and separation.”

Love One Another
John 13:34-35

Before Reading the Passage:

A rather sophisticated church in a county seat town was looking for a new pastor. The committee had asked a young preacher if he would consider being their pastor. A time was set for him to come and preach before the church.

He decided to slip into the town, unannounced, and to walk around the town to see what kind of folks were in the town. While he was there, he went to the church just to look at the outside of the church. As he stood in front of the church, a well-dressed rather sophisticated lady came up to him and began to talk to him. She asked if he was new in town and he said that he was. Then, she asked if he was thinking of coming to that church. He told her that it was a good possibility. She then said, "They only receive certain kinds of folks there; folks that are well-versed in the scriptures." She went on to ask if she could ask him some questions, which she did. Then she asked, "How many commandments are there?" He answered, "Eleven." With a high tone she began to talk down to him and told him that the smallest child in that church knew that there were only TEN commandments.

The next week the young preacher stood in the pulpit and took his text from John 13:34-35.

Read the Passage

Jesus uses a little phrase that is found no less than 55 times in the N.T. The little phrase is "one another."

-God desires UNITY among His people; not uniformity, but UNITY. He doesn't want us to all be alike, think alike, look alike or serve alike. That's why He gives us different personalities, different abilities, and different spiritual gifts. But He does want unity and harmony among His children.

-Psalm 133:1

For example: We are told to fellowship with one another, to serve one another, to exhort one another, to pray for one another, to greet one another, to edify one another, and we could go on and on.

-Love for one another has been called the "badge" of the Christian. They would say about the first century Christians, "See how they love one another!"

Understand that love is a VERB. Love is something you DO, not just something you SAY.

Three things I want to share with you from these verses:

I. The Command to Love One Another –John 13:34

Is it right for God to command us to love one another?

-Let's imagine a young man – perhaps on a Christian college campus somewhere – who sees a young lady and falls in love with her. But she is not the least bit interested in him! So, he goes up to her and says, "I command you to love me!" Can a man do that to a young lady?

Of course not! Then how can God command us to love one another?

We must understand that Christian love is not an emotional feeling that we manufacture. Christian love means this: We treat each other the way God treats us.

-Christian love is not a matter of feeling, it's a matter of willing. "God so loved...that He gave." God's love is not a sentimental feeling. God's love expresses itself in action. Christian love is an act of the will: we will to treat each other the way God treats us.

How does God treat us? God forgives us, so we forgive one another. God is kind to us, and so we are to be kind to one another.

God receives us, and so we are to receive one another. We willingly and deliberately treat each other the way God treats us. That is what it means to love one another.

-The interesting thing is this: The more we deliberately will to love one another, the more feelings begin to change; and lo and behold, we learn to like each other.

Notice that loving one another is not something that is optional. It is no elective in the classroom of faith. It is a requirement. It is no suggestion where Jesus says that things would go better if we loved one another, He is commanding us to love one another.

Jesus said that this was a "new commandment."

-But in Deut. 6:5, the scripture says, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

-In Lev. 19:18, we read that "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

-So, in what sense is it new? It is a higher standard of love. It is love based on the example of the Lord Jesus Himself. This standard of love is only possible "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5) and fruit of the spirit, which is love, is produced in us by the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:22).

Earlier, Jesus told us to love our enemies. Now He tells us to walk in love, as Christ has loved us (Eph. 5:2), put on love (Col. 3:14), serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13), do all things in love, speak the truth in love, abound in love (I Thess. 3:12).

II. The Challenge to Love One Another

A. Loving One Another Fulfills the Law – Romans 13:8-10

As Christians we do not obey the Law from external fear; We obey the Law from internal love. It is not compulsion on the outside; it is compassion on the inside.

-If I love you, I'm not going to try to kill you. If I love you, I'm not going to bear false witness against you.

-Love leads us back to the Golden Rule. Love seeks the highest good of the one loved.

Love is an unpaid DEBT – Romans 13:8. Love is the one debt we can never completely repay. We are ambassadors of God's love. We can never say, "I have loved that person enough. I'm going to stop loving now."

-Since we live in a fallen world, we often find ourselves surrounded by irritable, cranky, annoying, cantankerous people. And that's on a good day!

-It seems some folks have the "spiritual gift of irritation." They know how to get under your skin and how to "get on our last nerve"; and sometimes it's people we're married to!

-Paul is saying, "You can never give up on people who drive you nuts. You can never stop loving the mean-spirited people in your life. Keep loving them!"

Love does not harm others – Romans 13:10

Nothing does more harm in relationships, especially in the home between husband and wives and parents and children, than a person with an ill temper or an ill nature or a quarreling, bickering tongue. Cross words or words that put others down or talks down to others never results in anything good. A bossy, argumentative spirit from a know-it-all who always has to be right or get his way is always destructive.

-Sometimes I hear someone who lives their life that way, like an everyday bully, say, "Well, that's just my personality. I just speak my mind!" Well, Stop it! Learn to be tactful! Let God's love flow through your life.

B. Love for one Another Proves you Belong to God. I John 4:7-12

C. We are Taught of God to Love One Another – I Thess. 4:9-10

The words "brotherly love" means "to be born of the same womb through the new birth." Because of that our love for one another should result in tender affection, fondness, and devotion to one another.

-The phrase "taught of God" means that love is not taught, it's caught. Because we come from the womb of God, we share His basic nature, which is love. Therefore, love ought to be the most natural thing for believers to express.

-Brotherly love is at the very heart of our Christian faith.

-Nothing attracts folks to our church more than a loving, caring, fellowship that loves each other truly and deeply.

That's why Paul says to "let brotherly love increase more and more". The word carries the idea of love that last and last and last. It is like God's mercy that endures forever.

III. The Characteristics of One Another Love.

This kind of love is shown in:

A. It's unconditional Expression

The Viet Nam war was almost over. A young soldier called home when he reached New York. When his mother answered the phone, the boy told her he was safe and just wanted her to know that he had made it back to the states. The boy said, "Mom, is it alright if I bring a friend home?" She said, "Of course." The boy said, "I need to tell you he is missing his right leg...his left arm is gone, and his face is badly disfigured." The mother said, "That is fine. He can come and visit anytime." The boy said, "Mom, I want him to live with us for good." The mother said, "But, son, we don't want someone like that living with us." The phone went dead. In a few minutes the phone rang again. The caller was a policeman. He said, "I'm sorry to inform you that your son has just killed himself. We don't know why he did such a thing. Maybe he didn't think he could face life with only one leg and one arm and his disfigured face."

The love that Jesus is talking about is unconditional in its expression. Love is no respecter of persons, is without prejudice, is accepting of others, is kind and compassionate, shows courtesy and respect to each other, is tender-hearted and forgiving.

B. It's Unselfish Motive

Chad was not as smart as the other children in his class. Sometimes the other children were unkind to him. Valentine's Day was coming

up and Chad asked his mother if she would help him make Valentine's Day cards for every person in his class...35 of them. They worked hard on the cards...cutting and pasting each card. The next day he took special care to put all 35 cards in his book pack. The mother was afraid that he wouldn't get many cards so she made him some cookies and had the cookies and milk waiting for him when he got home from school. As he came up the drive the mother noticed that he had no cards in his hands, but he was smiling. As he came through the door he said with a smile, "Not a one...not a single one. Mom, I didn't miss a single one. I gave a card to everyone!"

A Bell is not a bell until you ring it
A Song is not a song until you sing it
Love is not love until you give it away

Hebrews 13:1 "Let brotherly love continue."

A Cure for Troubled Hearts John 14:1-3

The medical profession continues to report that a majority of the sickness that's treated is emotional. Much of the sickness today comes, not from some germ or some bacteria, but from some inward care or struggle of our heart or mind.

-Job 14:1 "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble."

Today we face an epidemic of trouble. There are global troubles and there are national troubles and there are personal troubles.

-Some of you may be troubled today and you wonder if there is any cure. There are many things to be troubled about, and many troubles enter our lives.

-Perhaps you are troubled today by the behavior of a loved one. You may be troubled by financial pressures or family problems or issues with your physical health.

Don't think that because you are a Christian that you won't have troubles. We all face troubles.

-It was true with our Lord's disciples.

Let me point out four things from these verses:

I. Our Lord's Assessment – John 14:1

"Let not your heart be troubled" The word "troubled" means "agitated, shaken, stressed out, worried, or restless."

Jesus could read the hearts of His disciples, but I think their very countenance indicated that they were troubled inwardly.

You see, Jesus had just dropped a major bombshell on His disciples. He has just told them that one of them was a traitor and that he would be betrayed by one of their number (John 13:21). Jesus tells them that he is going to leave them and that they cannot go with Him (John 13:33). Then He tells them that their leader, Peter, will deny Him three times (John 13:37-38).

After these three bombshells, Jesus sees that their hearts are troubled and he begins to offer them, what we might call, arguments against a troubled heart or a cure for their troubled hearts.

-The bottom line was this: They did not need to be troubled, because He was there for them and after He left, He would leave One just like Himself to minister to them and empower them and comfort them.

-What a blessing to know that in my difficulty there is a Divine Person there for me! There have been occasions where just knowing that He is there for me makes all the difference.

II. Our Lord's Antidote – John 14:1

"You believe in God, believe also in Me." But the eleven who were sitting around the table with Him had believed already. They had proven the reality of their faith by giving up everything for Christ sake. Yet, what does the Lord say to them here?

-Once more he presses on them the old lesson, the lesson with which they first began: "Believe! Believe More! Believe distinctly on Me! Believe personally in Me!"

-Never let us forget that there are degrees in faith and that there is a great difference between weak faith and strong faith.

-The weakest faith is enough to give a man a saving interest in Christ, and ought not to be scorned; but it will not give a man the same inward comfort that it gives a man with strong faith. A man with weak faith has a dimness of perception and does not see clearly what they believe and why they believe it.

Strong, deep faith in Christ is the surest remedy for the troubled heart.

Jesus gives the grounds of comfort and encouragement for troubled hearts. Let me list what Jesus gave them as an antidote for troubled hearts: (1) He told them heaven is sure, (2) Christ

is the certain and only way to heaven, (3)When Christ departs, His work for them will never cease, (4) in the absence of Christ, His disciples will have the presence and help of the Holy Spirit, (5) Christ will not leave his people forever, but will come back again to receive them unto Himself, (6)He will give the His peace to cheer and encourage them.

Keep on believing in God and in Me!

III. Our Lord's Assurance – John 14:2

Jesus assures them that He will prepare Heaven for them, and us, and that He will take us to heaven.

“Newsweek” did a poll in America recently and they said that the poll found that 77% of the people in America believed that Heaven really does exist. Of those 77% that believe in heaven, 75% believed that they were going there. What does this tell us? It tells us that most Americans believe that the way to Heaven is broad and almost anyone who is drawing breath and has a heartbeat will eventually get there. Yet, Jesus said the gate is small and the way narrow. Few will enter it. Matt. 7:13-14

I began to think about that. What would happen if people didn't believe in Heaven? What would our culture be like if it didn't believe in Heaven? What would happen if we believed that this life on earth was all there was? I came up with a few things that we could expect if folks didn't believe in Heaven.

1.Our culture would be obsessed with youth and trying to stay young.

We would spend millions of dollars trying to be young and stay young and look young. We'd spend millions on physical fitness and plastic surgery and diets and exercise equipment. If we didn't believe in Heaven, we'd do all we could to remain young.

2.We would extend people's life and long as possible.

We'd develop life-support systems for the elderly to stay off death, because there would be a fear of moving on into the unknown.

3.When death did come, we'd take very good care of the corpse.

We'd make sure our loved ones were buried in an air-tight, waterproof casket with comfortable linings and install piped music. We might even freeze the corpse so we could bring them back if they discovered a cure for what killed them.

4.Crime would increase because there would be no accountability after death.

5.We'd tell people that they could have Heaven on earth.

We are the first generation that doesn't get things because we NEED them, but because we WANT them. We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like! We grasp for more and more. A little better car, a little better house, a little better clothes to impress more and more people.

Someone said that life is a merry-go-round without the merry.

-Why aren't we happy? Because we are trying to find happiness in this life only.

What happened to the days when men walked with God?

The truth is, whether man believes in heaven or not doesn't change the truth about Heaven. Five hundred and fifty-seven times the Bible speaks about heaven.

Jesus said, “I go to prepare a Place for you.” Heaven is a Prepared Place and a Populated Place and a Perfect Place and a Perpetual Place.

In Heaven there will be Redeemed People and Righteous People and Rejoicing People.

I must tell you that not everyone is going to be in Heaven. Heaven is a Prepared Place for prepared people.

-The moment you place your trust in Christ, your name is written in the reservation book called, the Lamb's Book of Life.

-You don't have to worry about arriving late and losing your reservation. You see, no one arrives late or early to Heaven. Your place is ready and waiting for you.

Heaven is called “my Father's House.” Heaven is part of our inheritance in Christ. It is our blessing for being in God's family.

-The Father's House speaks of family, of love, of fellowship, of joys.

Heaven is a Huge Place and a Holy Place and a Beautiful Place.

-Think of the beauty of this earth. Remember that what we see of this earth with its mountains, trees, rivers, lakes, animals, sky, is in its fallen state. Think what it must have been like before sin entered the earth! God created this place in six days. He has been preparing Heaven for us for 2,000 years.

Jesus said, “In my Father's house are many mansions or many rooms.”

What kind of rooms are there? Let me suggest a few:

1. I think there will be a Fellowship Hall.

Heaven will be a place of fellowship. And listen, we won't need any introductions. We will know everybody. It will be a time of reunion in the fellowship hall of the Father's house. Think of all your loved ones who have gone on before. I think the fellowship hall will ring with joy and laughter!

2. Let me suggest that there will be a nursery in the Father's house.

There will be millions of babies in Heaven.

-I heard a story that came from the days when fathers had to wait outside the delivery room for the baby to be born. Three men were waiting for the joyous news. The first man was informed by the nurse that his wife had twins. And he told the nurse, "That's ironic. I pitch for the Minnesota Twins." A few minutes later the second man learned that his wife had triplets. He said, "Isn't that something? I work for the 3M company." The third man panicked and raced for the door. Someone stopped him and asked what happened? He said, "I work for a 7-11 store and I'm getting out of here!"

I understand, but I think the Father's house will have a large nursery.

- "Preacher, do you think babies remain babies in Heaven?" I don't know. There are good arguments on both sides of the issue. I do know our Lord does all things well.

-But why not? In describing heaven Jesus said, "for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." If children add so much to the joy of life in this world, why not in the world to come?

3. Let me suggest that Heaven has a workroom.

I don't think that we'll just be sitting on a fluffy white cloud wearing a halo and plucking a harp.

-There will be work for each of us to do. Rev. 22:3 says that "His servants shall serve Him."

4. Then I think there will be a Banquet Hall or Dining Room.

I look forward to breaking bread and having fellowship with Jesus. I think Baptist are going to have a head start on most people in this regard.

"Preacher, how do you know we'll eat in Heaven?" Do you remember when Jesus ate the Passover Supper with his disciples? He said, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." Then he said that He would drink of the fruit of the vine in His Father's Kingdom.

I could go on adding rooms, but I'll tell you this, there are no provisions for an infirmary. There will be no sick room there. There will be no provisions for a room of mourning and sorrow. In Heaven there will be no sickness, sorrow, pain, or death.

IV. Our Lord's Announcement – John 14:3

Jesus is going to come back personally to get us, His Bride, and take us to his Father's house.

Jesus is coming to earth again – What if it were today?

Coming in power and love to reign – What if it were today?

Coming to claim His chosen Bride, All the redeemed and purified,

Over this whole earth scattered wide – What if it were today?

Satan's dominion will then be o'er – O that it were today!

Sorrow and sighing shall be no more – O that it were today!

Then shall the dead in Christ arise, caught up to meet Him in the skies;

When shall these glories meet our eyes? What if it were today?

Faithful and true would He find us here, If He should come today?

Watching in gladness and not in fear, If He should come today?

Signs of His coming multiply, Morning light breaks in eastern sky;

Watch, for the time is drawing nigh – What if it were today?

Glory, glory! Joy to my heart 'twill bring; Glory, glory!

When we shall crown Him King, Glory, glory! Haste to

Prepare the way; Glory, glory, Jesus will come someday.

Before Reading the Passage:

Last week I shared the results of a poll done by "Newsweek." The poll, according to them, found that 77% of Americans said that they believed in heaven, and of those 77% who believed in heaven, 75% of them believed they were going to heaven.

-I came across another poll this past week that showed that 92% of Americans believed in heaven and nearly all of those were somewhat confident that they would be there.

What is this telling us? This tells us that most Americans believe that the way to heaven is broad and that almost anyone who is drawing breath and has a heartbeat will eventually get there.

Is that true? It is obvious as you read the words of Jesus that he does not share the same confidence as Americans on the subject.

-Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus describes the way to heaven as narrow and that FEW will be in Heaven.

-In light of what Jesus says, it behooves us to identify clearly the narrow way to Heaven.

Have you ever thought how awful it would be if God had not provided a plan for our redemption?

-We would be sentenced to a life of groping aimlessly in the dark. There would be absolutely no hope. What a fearful thing to live with the realization that when we drew our last breath, we would be bound hand and foot and cast into the Lake of Fire with no hope of escape!

But in His grace and mercy, God did provide a way for our forgiveness of sin and our redemption. And it is all in Jesus and Jesus only!

-True preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ must guard and clearly proclaim that Jesus is the only way to salvation. There must be no compromise!

Read the passage

Let me ask the question again: Is Jesus Christ the only way to Heaven?

Most of us here already know the answer to that question and we're ready to give our answer: "Yes! Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven."

-In giving our answer, we know that most of the world would give a different answer. We know that we believe something that is not universally accepted and is unpopular in many quarters.

We also know that some who agree with our answer don't like to talk about it openly. They fear stirring up trouble, so they had rather not discuss the question publicly.

-We know that some people react negatively when we say that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Sometimes others become very angry at us and bitterly hurl words at us like arrogant, bigoted, intolerant and narrow-minded. They may call us hatemongers and no one likes to be called names like that.

Others would try to ban us from saying publicly what we believe.

Jesus gave the mother of all politically incorrect and religiously incorrect statements.

-If what Jesus said is true, that means every other religion in the world is flat dead wrong! That one statement raises more blood pressures and makes more people's blood boil than you can make about any other subject.

There are more than 5 billion people who live on planet earth who revere or worship more than 300 gods. Are we to believe that only Christians are right?

Listen! With this one statement, Jesus put Christianity in a class by itself. If the only way to God is through Jesus Christ, then Christianity cannot be reconciled with any other religion.

-If words mean anything, Jesus is saying that He is the only way to be saved and the only way to the Father and the only way to Heaven.

-I make no apology when I say that Jesus Christ is not a good way to heaven. He is not a better way to Heaven. He is not even the best way to Heaven. Jesus Christ is THE ONLY WAY to Heaven.

Three things Jesus says:

I. Jesus Is the Way – John 14:6

There are many ways or paths that a person may travel in this life.

1. The Bible says of King Amon in 2 Kings 21:22, "And he forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and walked not in the ways of the Lord."

2. Prov. 2:13 speaks of those who "walk in the ways of darkness."

3.Prov. 4:14 speaks of walking in the path of the wicked and evil men.

4.Isaiah 53:6

5.Prov. 14:12 "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

The devil is going to say, "This is the way, walk with me." He will lead you in the ways of the drug culture, of the cults, of pleasures and allurements.

-Yet, Jesus came from glory, was made in the form of a man, was hung on the cross to take away our sins, rose again for our justification, and says, "I and I alone am the ONLY WAY."

-Notice I Tim. 2:5-6 Through His death and sacrifice on the cross, Jesus removed the barrier between us and the Father and reconciled us to God.

-Romans 5:1; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:18-19

1.Jesus is the Way Out – of sin's condemnation, bondage, and misery.

Jesus can bring you out of whatever sin has enslaved you – drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality, bitterness, jealousy, lust, or an unwillingness to forgive.

"His power can make you what you ought to be; his blood can cleanse your heart and make you free; His love can fill your soul, and you will see, 'Twas best for Him to have His way with thee."

2.Jesus is the Way In – 2 Cor. 5:17

Deut. 6:21-23 He brings US OUT of the land of sin and bondage and IN to a life of forgiveness and victory. He'll lift your life to a new level; to a newness of life, if you'll surrender your all to him.

"Out of my sorrow, bondage and night, Jesus I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light, Jesus, I come to Thee."

3.Jesus is the Way Through

We who have received Christ as Savior are not exempt from life's trials and tribulations, but we have the Lord to help us through them.

-PS. 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of death ..."

-Rom. 8:37 - "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Some through the waters, some through the flood. Some through the fire, but all through the blood. Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song; He leads His dear children along."

4.Jesus is the Way Up

At the moment of death our soul goes to be with Jesus. "To be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord." Death is the gateway into the very presence of God.

II. Jesus is the Truth – John 14:6

Satan is the father of lies.

-Romans 1:25 says that man has exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

-Yet, the Bible says that God cannot lie.

If a man teaches moral truth, his character makes all the difference in the world. Moral truth cannot be conveyed solely in words. It must be conveyed in example.

How can a selfish person really teach the value of generosity? How can an adulterer teach the necessity of purity? How can an egotistical person teach the beauty of humility? An embittered person cannot effectively teach on forgiveness and love.

-No teacher has ever completely embodied the truth he taught, except Jesus.

-Many can say, "I have taught you the truth." Only Jesus could say, "I am the truth."

III. Jesus is the Life – John 14:6

Jesus is "the life" for all who will repent and believe on Him alone for salvation. He alone delivers us from death.

Without Christ, men are dead in trespasses and sin. But John 5:24 says the one that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”

-John 10:10; 11:25

-Jesus is the source and the Author of life.

-I John 5:12 “He who has the Son has life.”

Jesus said: I am the way, without me there is no Going

I am the Truth, without me there is no Knowing

I am the Life, without me there is no Growing.

Jesus is the way To God, the truth OF God, and the life FROM God.

Someone said that you are either ON the way or IN the way; in the way of others who need to find the way.

Power for Ministry

John 14:12-27

We need to remember that everything that is written in John 14 is intended to comfort our Lord's disciples.

-He has told them that He is leaving them and where He is going, they cannot follow him – now. They would follow Him later. They would be with Him - later. But He must leave them for now.

The disciples felt like their ministries were over since Christ was leaving. Now He stuns them by saying that the works that He does, they too will do AND even greater works.

He is going to share with His disciples four sources of Power that He will give them so they can accomplish what He wants them to accomplish after He leaves them.

Before He does this, He wants His disciples to know how close and how mysterious the union is between God the Father and God the Son.

-Christ is very God of very God. Christ is equal with the Father in all things. Christ is one with the Father.

1. John 14:7 “If you had known Me, you should have known the Father, also.”
2. John 14:9 “He that has seen me, has seen the Father.”
3. John 14:10 “I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me.”
4. John 14:10 “The Father that dwells in me, He does the works.”
5. John 14:11 “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.”

Jesus is dependent upon the Father just like we are dependent upon the Son through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus offers His disciples four things that will comfort their hearts.

I. Power – John 14:12

Jesus begins by saying, “Verily, verily” or “Truly, truly”. Our Lord was saying, “Now, get this message.” He is about to tell them something that will blow their minds.

Here is what Jesus promises: Power! “If you believe in Me, the works that I do, you shall do also; AND Greater works than these shall you do; because I'm going to My Father.”

That's the promise, but when we think of it, the promise seems unrealistic, if NOT impossible.

-Think of it: Jesus had healed the sick, calmed the troubled sea, fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, raised the dead. These are great works! How could Jesus have said what he said?

This verse is often claimed as a proof text for those who claim to work miracles in our day.

-Yet, I believe Jesus is talking about greater miracles in importance, in scope, in quantity.

- Spiritual miracles are greater in importance than physical miracles because physical miracles are temporary.
- Christians have a greater message to give today. We not only have the O.T., we have
the Gospels, the epistles, the book of Acts, and Revelation.
- The Lord never preached outside of Israel. We have the whole world at our disposal.
- Christians have been enabled to do greater works because the Holy Spirit works through the believer. On the Day of Pentecost

3,000 were saved.

- We are also able to do greater works because our Lord is interceding for us. Heb. 7:25
- Our work is His work when He initiates the work and when the work is done for His glory.

Isn't it just like our sweet, wonderful Lord to encourage and comfort us by saying, "I want you to do greater works than I."?

II. Prayer - John 14:13-14

The "name it and claim it" boys have grossly misused this verse. This is no blanket promise to get anything we want. God is too wise to answer such prayers.

Notice what Jesus said: "And whatsoever you shall ask IN MY NAME"

-Praying in Jesus' name is more than a formula we add at the end of our prayers. We are so used to hearing "in Jesus' name, Amen" that we feel uncomfortable if we don't hear it when someone prays. We even suspect that the prayer is a bit "illegal" because it doesn't end with "in Jesus' name, Amen."

-Here's a bit of Bible trivia that may surprise you. Go back and read all the prayers in the N.T. Not a single one ends with the phrase "in Jesus' name, Amen." Yet, those prayers were being offered according to the promise of asking in Jesus' name.

Some think of the phrase as a kind of spiritual Abracadabra or open sesame or the Christian equivalent of rubbing Aladdin's lamp. There is nothing magical about it.

Names in the bible often represent character or authority or a person's reputation.

-Praying in Jesus' name is like signing His name to our prayers. In a sense we are saying to God, "Jesus told me to pray this prayer." What do you think the Father will do with a prayer truly signed by His Son? He'll grant it, because He always honors what His Son wants.

-Let's turn that truth around. Sometimes people forge other people's name. Many of our prayers are spiritual forgeries because we are signing Jesus' name to prayers He has not approved.

When we pray in Jesus' name, we are confessing our faith that Jesus is the only way to God.

-It is only by virtue of what Jesus has accomplished that any of us can come into the presence of God. To approach God apart from Jesus Christ is to guarantee that we will be turned away.

When we pray in Jesus' name, we submit our will to his will because He knows what is best. That's what Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Here are the things that matter in prayer. Prayer must be made in Jesus' name, it must be offered in the right spirit, it must be for the glory of God, and there must be no unrepented of sin in our life that would block our prayer.

III. Promise - John 14:15-18, 25-26

The word "another" means "another of the same kind." The comforter would be of the same kind as Jesus.

-He would be divine, too. He would fill the place of Christ on earth while He is at the right hand of God the Father.

The word for the Holy Spirit is "Paraclete". It is the same root word that we get our English word Parallel.

-When you think of two lines running parallel, you think of two lines running alongside each other, never spreading apart. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will be WITH you and IN you. The word Paraclete carries the idea of advising, exhorting, comforting, strengthening, interceding, and encouraging.

-He is also our advocate, our counsel, our coach, our helper, our supporter, our defender, our teacher.

We ought to treat the Holy Spirit the way we would treat Jesus. We are the temple; the house of the Holy Spirit. We should never grieve Him or quench Him.

He seals us and places us into the body of Christ. What a wonderful gift to see us through until Jesus comes to receive us unto Himself.

IV. Peace - John 14:27

Peace or Shalom was the common greeting among Jewish people. It expressed the wish for wholeness, completeness, well-being.

-Peace is an internal tranquility.

1. Peace is the profound awareness of God's faithfulness and providence.
2. Peace is calmness of Spirit when confronted with danger or opposition.
3. Peace is consciousness of God's forgiveness of our sin.
4. Peace is assurance of heaven while staring death in the face.
5. Peace is abiding assurance that we are born again.

6. Peace is joy in knowing we are adopted into God's family and are heirs of God and joint – heirs with Christ. It is not only Peace WITH God that Jesus gives, but the Peace OF God as well.

Isaiah 26:3

How to Be A Fruitful Christian John 15:1-11

Before Reading the passage

Let me remind you that all of the events in John 13-17 all take place just 24 hours before Jesus dies on the cross.

-John 14 deals with our Hope in Heaven; John 15 deals with our Help on Earth.

-The last phrase of John 14 says, "Arise and let us go hence." Jesus and the disciples left the Upper Room, made their way through the city of Jerusalem and headed toward the Garden of Gethsemane via the Kidron Valley. Thus, it would seem that John 15 is actually given to the disciples when they were en route from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane.

-It being Passover season and the month of April, they would have been traveling under a full moon. Something prompted Jesus to talk to the disciples about vines, vinedressers, and fruit. Maybe they saw the magnificent temple structure with its massive vine-engraved doors off in the distance; or maybe they passed through the Golden Gate which also had gorgeous vines carved into it; or, being April, the grape vines would be beginning to blossom with the promise of a fresh harvest.

-Jesus may have taken the branches of a vine in His hands and explained to them: "As these branches are united or connected in the vine, so you are united or connected in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. As these branches abide in the vine; just so, you are to abide in Me." Then He holds the grapes in His hand and says, "These branches bear fruit because they are connected to the vine. If they were not connected, they could bear no fruit. Just so, without Me, you will not be able to bear fruit. In fact, without me, you can do nothing."

As we go through these verses, remember that this passage is for Believers only.

Read the Passage:

This is the seventh of our Lord's "I Am" statements in the Gospel of John. He has said, "I am the Bread of life; the Light of the world; the Door of the Sheep. The Good Shepherd; the Resurrection and the Life; the Way, the truth, the Life."

-Here Jesus adds a word that is not in the other "I Am" statements. He says, "I am the TRUE vine." Why would He add the word "True"? Because the vine was the historic as well as the religious symbol of Israel.

-The O.T. Portrays Israel as God's vine, but Israel proved to be a fruitless, unfaithful vine. All through the O.T. We see Israel's faithless rejection of God's gracious, tender care.

- Ps. 80:8-10a, 14-16a; Jer. 2:21; Isa. 5:1-5, 7a

- God intended for Israel to bring forth the messiah and for the nation to follow Him and for Israel to be an example to all the other nations and point the way to the Messiah, to live pure and holy lives. But Israel failed to realize her expectations and she never achieved her goal.

- Jesus is the TRUE VINE. He will accomplish all that God intended His Messiah to do. He will restore Israel.

- Jesus knew His disciples would soon be kicked out of the temple worship, barred from the synagogue, ostracized from the traditions of Judaism. I think Jesus is saying, "I am the True Vine. Don't be deceived. It is not Judaism. It is not religion. It's ME!"

I. The Communication of Jesus – John 15:1-2

It is important that we understand three terms:

A. Vine

Jesus Himself is the vine. He is the source of life. He is the sap of life. He is life. Without Him, there would be no branches, no fruit, and no vineyard.

-The very first thing we need to learn is that without Him, we have no life. And once we are IN Him, the life we have is really His life flowing through us. We never stop receiving our life from Him.

- Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20

B. The Branches

Branches speaks of true believers. Branches are actually extensions of the vine. There is no fixed line that says, "The vine ends here and the branch begins there."

-That is why Jesus couldn't have chosen a better illustration of the intimate bond He desires between Himself and His followers. He wants us to identify so closely with Him that others cannot tell where He leaves off and where we begin.

-This implies that we have a continual sense of needing Him.

C. The Husbandman or Vinedresser

The Father is the Vinedresser who cares for the vineyard. He watches over it, keeps it clean and does everything needful so it will bear much fruit.

II. The Challenge of Jesus – John 15:4-5

Three things Jesus challenges His disciples to do:

A. Abide in Him

Ten times in eleven verses Jesus uses the word “Abide”.

-The main subject is Abiding; Not Bearing Fruit! Abiding!

-What does it mean to Abide in Christ? The word “Abide” is from the Greek word “Meno” and means “to settle down and be at home with; to remain with someone; to spend time with someone so that you can really get to know them deeply and personally.”

-We are to get as close to the Lord Jesus as we can; to become one with Him; to become an extension of Him.

-We must be at home with Jesus; to stay in touch with Jesus; to stay in contact with Jesus.

How do we do that? Through His word. Through prayer. Through worship.

-Well, Preacher, I'd like to be close to Jesus, but if Abiding in Him means daily reading His Word, praying, and being faithful in worship, I just don't have time.”

-A man went to the doctor and told him he needed a good physical. He said, “Doc, my energy level is so low I don't want to do anything anymore.” The doctor examined him and did some test.

The man came back the next week for the results of the test and the man said, “Doctor, give it to me straight. I can take it, but no big medical term. Just tell me in plain English, why I don't want to do anything anymore.” The doctor said, “Alright, here it is straight and in plain English. You don't want to do anything anymore because you're lazy!” Do you know why a lot of Christians don't have time to abide in Christ? They're spiritually lazy. They don't want to discipline themselves in the things of God.

-I don't know how close you are to Jesus, but I know this, you're as close as you want to be.

How many times have you heard someone say, “If you're going to get ahead in this old world, you've got to have the right connections”? If you are going to amount to anything for the Lord, you've got to have the right connections, too!

B. Bear Fruit

John 15:2 mentions “no fruit”, “fruit”, and “more fruit”; John 15:5 speaks of “much fruit”.

-Many Christians make fruit – bearing more complicated and difficult than it really is. Some have struggled and worked and tried and served and they are discouraged over their lack of fruitfulness and resentful of others who are fruitful.

-Have you ever seen a fruit tree or a grapevine struggle to produce fruit? Well, how do you bear fruit? By abiding.

Even though the branch BEARS fruit, it doesn't PRODUCE the fruit. The branches of the vine just abide in the vine, remaining connected to the vine. Permanently. Consistently. Day after week after month after year. They simply rest in their connected position, allowing the sap of the vine to flow freely through them. They exert no effort of their own. The fruit borne on the branch is actually produced by the life-giving sap within.

-To bear fruit is to abide in Christ and stay connected to him so completely that the “Sap of the Holy Spirit” flows through every part of our being. The fruit that we bear is actually produced by His Spirit in you through no conscious effort of your own.

-If you and I want to be fruitful, we don't concentrate on fruit bearing, we concentrate on our personal relationship and fellowship with our Lord Jesus.

What is the fruit our Lord wants us to bear?

1. Rom. 1:13 – The winning of souls
2. Rom. 6:22 – The fruit of holiness
3. Rom. 15:26-28 – Financial giving
4. Col. 1:10 – Every good work
5. Heb. 13:15 – Giving thanks and praise to God with our lips.
6. Gal. 5:22-23 – The ultimate and most important fruit is love.

C. Remain in your abiding – John 15:16a

That your fruit will be genuine and accompany you to glory.

III. The Caution of Jesus

A. John 15:5 Without Him we can do nothing. We think we can do something. That's our opinion. Yet, He says we can do nothing of

eternal worth. Nothing is a zero with the rim knocked off.

B. John 15:11 If we fail to abide, we will lose our joy.

Ron Dunn tells of speaking at a Valentine Banquet. The pastor had told him that there was a couple in the church that was causing problems. As they sat at the table, a man was telling jokes before he was to speak. They were stale jokes, but everyone was laughing and having a good time except one couple. Ron leaned over to the pastor and said, "I can point out the couple that's causing you problems." When he pointed them out the pastor said, "How did you know?"

Jesus: The Best Friend We Can Ever Have

John 15:12-17

Before Reading the passage:

As we come to John 15, Jesus is just hours away from crucifixion. He has already spent time in the Upper Room with His disciples, teaching them and giving them instruction to follow.

-Now they leave the Upper Room and head for the Garden of Gethsemane where Judas will point Him out and betray Him with a kiss and He will be arrested.

-In these verses we are about to read, Jesus gives His disciples further instructions.

Read the Passage

Jesus IS the best friend we can ever have!

-We all need friends! True friends! What is a True Friend? The Bible gives us the ultimate truth about friends – Prov. 18:24

Webster defines "friend" as "a favored companion."

-The statement is true: you and I make many acquaintances as we pass through this life, but only very few true and genuine friends.

-Aristotle was once asked, "What is a friend?" He replied, "A single soul dwelling in two bodies."

-The Lord has blessed my life by allowing me to enjoy the friendship of some very special people; many of them sitting in this very room.

But there is a Friend who is more special than any other I have ever met in this life. His name is Jesus and I do not call Him my Friend, but He calls me His.

-Think about that for a minute. If the President (or Bill Gates) were to call me his friend, he has raised me to his level. However, if I presume to call him my friend, I have not elevated him at all, but I have brought him down somewhat.

-It is one thing for me to sing, "What A Friend I Have in Jesus." It is quite another when Jesus says that He has a friend in me. There's a vast difference between the two!

-When Jesus calls us His friend, it confers upon us the highest conceivable honor, that such a Lord as He, so infinitely superior to us, should condescend to enter into terms of friendship with us.

-There cannot be friendship if it is all on one side. Friendship is a reciprocal thing. The one heart must be as the other heart, or else there is no friendship.

-Jesus and I are friends because we have a mutual love for each other. Two friends value each other.

"My Jesus I love Thee; I know Thou are Mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign."

Though we have not seen Him with our physical eyes, we have seen Him in faith with our soul's eyes, which are better by far, and as we have beheld Him, our soul rejoices in the glance of His beauty!

Friends not only have a mutual love for one another, but friends must have a harmony of thought.

-What Jesus loves, we love; What Jesus hates, we hate; What Jesus seeks, we seek; What Jesus shuns, we shun. This is true when there is but one heart in two bodies.

Christ's object is His Father's glory. That is to be our object, too.

-His focus is to seek and to save the lost. That is to be our focus, too.

-Jesus loves truth, holiness, righteousness, and harmony. We must love those same things.

Several times God referred to certain ones as His friend:

- Ex. 33:11 - "The Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."
- James 2:23 – Abraham is called the friend of God.
- Isaiah 41:8 – Abraham's seed, the faithful of Israel, are called the friends of God.
- John 11:11 – Lazarus is called a friend by Jesus.
- John 15 – Jesus calls His disciples "friend."
- Matt. 26:50 – Judas is leading an army to arrest Jesus, and the Lord calls Judas, "friend."

May I tell you? Jesus is the sinner's Friend!

Three things I want to share with you. Our Lord's friendship is seen in:

I. His Sacrifice – John 15:13

Friends sacrifice for one another, and no One sacrificed more than Jesus.

A. His Sacrifice was Voluntary

The statement, "Lay down His life", indicates a voluntary act. No one forced Jesus to lay down His life. He could have called thousands of angels to rescue Him, and they would have been delighted to do so!
-No one took His life against His will. He voluntarily gave up His life on the cross.

B. His Sacrifice was Vicarious

The word "vicarious" means "to become a substitute for another or to take another's place, either in benefit or suffering."
-Jesus gave His life up for His friends. His death on the cross was not for Himself, but for His friends. Friend, Jesus was dying for you and me so we would not have to go to Hell.

C. His Sacrifice was Vicious

We will never know the depths of suffering Jesus endured, but a few verses make it clear that he paid a terribly high price when He died for us.

- Matt. 26:47-56 He was betrayed by Judas and deserted by His disciples.
- Luke 22:63-64 He was beaten by the Temple guards.
- Matt. 27:26 He was scourged until He could see some of his own bones.
- Matt. 27:26-29 He was mocked by the soldiers and crowned with thorns.
- Isaiah 50:6 His beard was plucked from His face.
- Matt. 27:35 He was nailed to the cross and hung up to die.
- Isa. 50:14 He was marred beyond belief. He did all of this for you and me.

D. His Sacrifice was Victorious

Those who looked at the death of Jesus on the cross cried out, "What a tragedy!" But His death ranks as one of the most glorious days in the history of mankind!

-He knew that in His death, He had satisfied the righteous demands of a Holy God concerning the atonement for sin.

-Isa. 53:10-12 The fact that God was completely satisfied in His atonement for our sin was proven three days later when Jesus was resurrected from the death. Matt. 28:1-6

II. His Sharing – John 15:14-15

These verses tell us that Jesus shared some special gifts with us:

A. He shares His Love

The truth of the Love of God fills the pages of the Word of God. Jer. 31:3 calls His love "everlasting love."

-His love is what motivated Him to go to the cross (Rom. 5:8) and His love is so powerful that nothing can separate us from His love.

Romans 8:38-39

-Prov. 17:17 "A friend loves at all times."

Rom. 5:5 When we are born again, God shed His love in our hearts so that we can love one another, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

John 13:34-35; John 15:12, 19

How believers relate to one another is of critical importance. Division will destroy a fellowship of believers quicker than any other single thing.

-Nothing cuts the heart of Jesus more than self-centeredness and divisive behavior.

Being a "friend" of Jesus is conditional. The verses give us the guide for friendship with Jesus.

-We are friends of Jesus, but Jesus must be first. We have a personal obligation to do WHATSOEVER He commands us to do. The verb refers to continuous, consistent obedience; not hit and miss obedience.

B. He shares His Life

Jesus not only gave His life FOR US, but He also IMPARTS His life TO us day by day.

-He gives us a heart to live for Him!

C. He shares His Lessons – John 15:15

He will not keep the truth hidden from His friends, but will teach them all things about the Father. He shares with us the deepest secrets of divine truth and holds nothing back from His friends!

III. His Salvation – John 15:16

Sinners are dead in trespasses and sins. In grace, God calls us to Himself.

-He gives the sinner an inner awareness of his sins and a knowledge that Jesus Christ is the only hope for the sinner.

He gives us wonderful promises that our lives will bear fruit and that our fruit will remain, and if we ask anything in the Father's name, He will give to us.

The song says, "What a Precious Friend Is He!"

"On His promises I'm relying.

All my needs he is supplying.

He'll be there when I am dying.

What a Precious Friend is He!

He'll go with me through the valleys.

He 'll go with me all the way...every day.

Savior, help me to have faith in Thee.

Oh, what a Precious Friend is He!"

Warning: Prepare for Persecution

John 15:17-25; John 16:1-4

Persecution is one of those words we do not want to think about.

-So often in our minds, persecution is something that happens in China or Russia or in the primitive areas of Africa.

-It is true that persecution does take place in those areas, but persecution, in a Variety of forms, takes place even here.

-Sometimes it is the attitude taken by the media in trying to discredit the Christian message and messengers. Other times it is the imprisonment, punishment, or even killing of Christians for speaking publicly for Christ.

While we may not see Christians being killed for their faith in our country, there is constant opposition to Christians going on by the world.

-Christians are made to look like we are backward, ignorant, shallow, and uninformed. Those who stand for the truth of God's Word are insulted, lied about, and even called hate-mongers.

-Christians are often mistreated in job-settings due to their faith. Some get overlooked in promotions. I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture.

Our Lord warned us about persecution so that it would not surprise us or catch us off guard.

-2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-13

Notice John 16:1 "These things have I spoken unto you that you should not be offended...be made to stumble...be caused to desert or distrust the one you ought to obey"

-The Lord didn't want us to be caught off guard or surprised or shocked when persecution did come and be tempted to quit serving the Lord.

Notice:

I. The Expectations

Jesus tells us what we as Christians can expect from the world or the world system which is ruled and controlled by Satan.

A. We can expect to be Hated by the world- John 15:18

The word "hate" means to be seen as detestable, as despised, and to be looked upon with disdain. It is an active hostility which is shown in one's attitude toward another and shows itself in words and actions.

B. We can expect to be Persecuted – John 15:20

The word "persecuted" means to be hounded, mistreated, and harassed. It means to do harm to, to be cruel to, to do evil against. It can be done behind one's back or to his face.

C. We can expect to be Ostracized – John 16:2a

The word "ostracized" means to be excluded or rejected from a group, to refuse acceptance, to be isolated from society.

-The synagogue was everything to the Jewish people. All the social, economic, and religious life surrounded the life of the synagogue.

-If you were put out of the synagogue you could lose your job; you became a moral outlaw; you were considered the scum of the earth.

To be threatened with being put out of the synagogue caused great fear.

D. We can expect the possibility of Death – John 16:2b

Some, like Saul who consented to the stoning of Stephen, believed when they put a Christian to death, they were doing God a service, or it was like a sacrifice unto the Lord.

II. The Explanation

Why are Christians persecuted?

A. Because Christians are not of this world – John 15:18-19

Satan is "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Satan runs the world's evil system. His purpose is to fight against Christ and God.

-The Christian stands in direct opposition to Satan. The Christian loves righteousness and hates iniquity. Our life is a rebuke to Satan.

We are a condemnation to the evil works of Satan and he hates us for it.

-1 John 3:12

God has called Christians to live separate from the evil world system.

-2 Cor. 6:17; Phil. 2:15

B. Because the world hates Christ – John 15:18

Why would anyone hate Jesus Christ? He always treated others with kindness and love. He went about doing good – healing the sick, relieving human misery, showing mercy. How can anyone hate a person like Jesus?

-They hated Jesus because He confronted their sin. He showed them what they were like: how sinful they were. Men don't like to be confronted with their sin.

Does the world still hate Jesus and His followers? Just try to put up a Nativity Scene on public property, or sing Christmas carols that include the name of Jesus at schools, or pray and read the Bible at schools. Even now, a Judge is trying to have the words, "In God We Trust" removed from all our currency.

The world hates us because they hate Christ, whom we represent.

-Hate isn't something that can be stored up for very long; it has to be vented. The world has always hated Christ and now that He is gone, they unleash their hatred on those who represent Him. We get the brunt of the hatred that is ultimately directed toward Christ. Let me assure you that the hatred of the world is just as real today as it was 2,000 years ago.

-Notice John 15:19-20 A good example would be Stephen, the first martyr.

There is a little word of encouragement for the believer at the end of John 15:20: "If they keep my word, they will keep yours also." That is, not all will hate, not all will persecute. Some will receive, some will believe, some will listen and respond, as they did with Jesus.

-The church need never expect to win the masses of people to Christ; Jesus didn't, but some will!

C. Because the world doesn't know God – John 15:21-25

The hardest fact for the Jews to accept was that they didn't really know God. They thought they did, but they didn't.

-Imagine what rage the Jewish leaders felt when Jesus said that they did not really know God. They prided themselves on their

knowledge of God.

Man is born into the world as an enemy of God. He is indifferent, rebellious, and hateful toward God. Men don't know God, let alone love Him. And being religious doesn't mean you know God either.

Someone might say, "It's not my fault I'm ignorant of God. I came into the world not knowing God, so you can't hold me responsible."
-Everyone is responsible. Every man comes into this world with the basic knowledge that God exists. God is revealed from creation as well and the law of God is written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, "so that they are without excuse."

Then how did man get to the place of not knowing God?

-Rom. 1:21,28

D. Because they willfully and deliberately reject Christ – John 15:22

This is one of the most important verses in the book of John. Jesus is not talking about sin in general. He is talking about the sin of willful rejection in the presence of total revelation.

-Jesus said that the cloak of their hypocrisy is ripped off. You can't hide your sin of willful rejection from God. It is obvious to Him because you spurn Him.

-The greatest sin that a man can commit is to reject God in the face of full revelation of Him.

In John 15:25, Jesus said that they hated Him without a cause.

-Jesus had spoken enough words and done enough deeds to make them responsible for their unbelief. They continued to hate Jesus for no other reason than their own sin.

-The world hated Jesus because He exposed their sin. He showed them who they were and they didn't like it.

III. The Exception

Both Jesus and Paul tell us that if we are a follower of Jesus, we will experience persecution. But you say, "Well, I've never experienced persecution. In fact, I'm getting along just fine in this world."

The truth is that the average Christian does so very little to deserve the antagonism of the world.

Why should the world trouble itself with the average church member when they are so much like the world and do nothing to offend the world?

-Many so-called Christians do all they can to hide the fact that they are followers of the Lord. They go to the same places, do the same things, talk the same way as the world. If someone in the world uses the Lord's name in vain, we act as if we didn't hear them and make no effort to rebuke them or speak a word for our Lord. If the group suggest doing something shady or immoral, there is nothing said to discourage the action. We just kind of go along with the group. So, why should the world hate that kind of Christianity?

A young man who had been saved for a short time was going to work for the summer in a logging camp. The people at the church warned him that the men at the camp were pretty rough men. They were bad to curse and drink and gamble and go into town looking for immoral women. They told him that he would have to be strong in his faith. At the end of the summer, he came back to his home town and his church and they asked him how things went. He said, "Everything went great! No one even suspected I was a Christian."

The world likes "Christians" that are just like they are. Those who will be hated are those who are sold out to the Lord. Someone said the trouble with most modern day Christians is that no one wants to kill them anymore.

-That doesn't mean that folks want to kill them because they are so hard to get along with, but because they are so Christ-like.

IV. The Exhortation

If we really live as Christ and find ourselves being persecuted, how do we respond?

Remember, the world has a very keen eye for the inconsistencies and the faults of professing Christians.

Meet their antagonism by not dropping your standard one inch. If you begin to lower your standards, where are you going to stop? How low are you willing to lower your standards?

-Don't try to appease the world by compromising your standards. Meet hostility with patient Christlike love and sympathy.

I Peter 2:19-24 The word "example" in I Peter 2:21 means a copy. Jesus established a pattern of suffering for Christians to follow in confronting the world.

-Jesus never retaliated for the suffering He received; He took it willingly. He not only suffered on the cross to take away our sin, but He suffered to give us a pattern of how to confront the world. If the world abuses us, we ought to take it in silence and count ourselves worthy to have suffered like Jesus. Don't be surprised if you suffer; our Lord did, and His servants are not exempt from the same kind of treatment.

Do you belong to Jesus? If so, persecution will come. Be strong in the Lord. Do not compromise. Do not lower your standards. Love Him with your whole heart!

The Crisis of Conviction in the Life of the Lost

John 16:7-14

Before Reading the Passage:

We have come to the eve of our Lord's crucifixion. It is 10:30 or 11:00 pm. on Thursday night.

- Judas has already slipped out from the upper room and the Last Supper to go to the religious leaders to collect his thirty pieces of silver for betraying the Lord.
- All the actors have taken their place. In just a few minutes Jesus will go to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. A few minutes later Judas will kiss the cheek of Jesus and set in motion the whole cycle of events that lead to the crucifixion.
- So, these words of our Lord taken from John 16 are among the last words to His disciples. That gives them double importance. These are the final instructions of the Son of God before He goes to the cross.

Read the Passage

Notice again John 16:7 - "I tell you the truth."

- Why would Jesus have to remind them that He is telling the truth? He always tells the truth. More than that, He is Truth!
- He tells them that because it's hard to swallow something that somebody tells you that you think is bad when they say it is good for you. And that's what Jesus does.

"It is expedient (best, of profit to, to your advantage) for you that I go away."

- How could that possibly be true? How could anything be better than the physical presence of the Son of God?
- I'm sure that if we took a vote and asked, "Would you rather have the Holy Spirit inside you or have Jesus sitting next to you?" all of us would vote to have Jesus, the Son of God, right here so we could see Him and talk to Him. That's understandable.
- But Jesus said, "No, it's better for you that I should go because if I don't go, I can't send the Holy Spirit to you."

Why was it better for Jesus to leave so that He could send the Holy Spirit?

- (1) If Jesus had stayed with the disciples, He could not have died on the cross and be buried and resurrected on the third day and if He had not died for our sins and if He had not been risen for our justification, He could not have paid the price for our sins and become our only Savior. That would mean that we would all be in our sin with no hope of forgiveness and salvation.
- (2) He had to die on the cross and rise again to defeat the power of Satan and death. Jesus defeated Satan at the cross and gained the victory over Satan, death, the grave and hell.
- (3) Now in Heaven we have one seated at the right hand of the throne of God making intercession for us who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, because He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, because He was tempted in all points just as we are, yet without sin.
- (4) If He had not gone away, He could have been in only one place at one time. Now, the Holy Spirit is with and in every believer in every place.

Now Jesus tells His disciples one of the main ministries - jobs - of the Holy Spirit - to bring conviction of sin to sinful man.

The word "reprove" (KJV) means both to convict and to convince a person.

We use the term "being under conviction" a lot. What does it mean?

- Did you know that a lost man will never be saved until he is brought under conviction of his lostness and sinfulness?
- That is why we say, "You can't get a man saved until you get him lost." If he never sees his need to be saved, he will never want to be saved.

What does it mean to be under conviction?

Under the Shadow of the Broad Brim is the life story of the great preacher, Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon grew up in a Puritan background, with a Puritan preacher father and grandfather. He was taught the way of God even as an infant. At age six he was reading Pilgrim's Progress and theological books. But it wasn't until age sixteen there came a personal crisis of conviction which

preceded his salvation. At age sixteen there came a “burdened soul,” as Spurgeon called it. He became terribly troubled about the fact that he was a sinner. There was a consciousness that he was lost and under the condemnation of the judgment of God. He wanted to get the matter settled and so on a cold winter Sunday he started out to go to a large, well-known church, but it was so cold he could not make it there. Instead, he found a small chapel and slipped in the back door. The weather was so bad that the pastor could not get there, but a layman stood to speak. Spurgeon sat on the back, but the man noticed that he was troubled. The man looked at Spurgeon and said, “Young man, you are troubled in your spirit. Look to Jesus and live.” That’s all he said ... “Look to Jesus and live.” And Spurgeon’s testimony was that that day his burden was lifted and salvation came to his soul.

- The truth is that every person who has been saved can tell that same story. Oh, the details will be different, but for every person who has been saved, there was that moment of personal crisis of conviction when you were brought to realize that you were a lost sinner and needed to be saved.

Three things I want you to see:

I. The Pressing Nature of Conviction - John 16:8

A. Conviction is an Awakening Experience

It is the Holy Spirit’s job to both convict and convince.

- This is a Greek word which comes from the drama of a courtroom trial.

It is a word which refers to what the prosecuting attorney does when he argues his case. He puts the defendant on the witness stand and begins to pile up the evidence against the defendant. He piles up the evidence, fact upon fact, upon fact, upon fact, until finally, the enormity of the evidence is so overwhelming that the judge is forced to say, “I find you guilty beyond any reasonable doubt.”

- It means to convict of guilt in a court of law.

- More than that, it means to present the evidence in such an overwhelming fashion that even the defendant is compelled at the end of the trial to step up and say, “I admit it. I confess I’m guilty.”

The Holy Spirit brings things to light in the sinner’s life; both his actions and his thought life.

- He exposes every sin in his life - the things he has done wrong and the things he failed to do right. He shows someone his or her faults.

- Conviction goes beyond Accusing someone of wrong doing. The accusation must be proven.

- The Holy Spirit pricks a person’s heart until he knows he’s guilty.

The Holy Spirit convicts and then He convinces. What does that mean?

- The Holy Spirit will open a man’s heart and lay it bare and reveal to that man his sin. When He does that, the Holy Spirit shows the sinner that he is condemned before God. God’s condemnation exposes him to God’s sentence upon his life - he is under God’s judgment and wrath. His judgment of doom in hell.

- Here’s what God will convince him of about himself, he’s an ungodly sinner.

- Look at Jude 14-15. Notice the word “ungodly” is used four times. The Holy Spirit will convince every lost person that he is an ungodly man who does ungodly deeds in an ungodly way for he is an ungodly sinner.

As the sinner sees his ungodly heart exposed before a Holy God, he will sense his own Hopelessness, his own inevitable judgment, his own fear, his own lostness, his own vileness, corrupt to the core.

B. Conviction is an Alarming Experience

The Holy Spirit hammers and drives a person to see the tragedy of his soul without Christ.

- Listen to how folks described what it’s like to be convicted by the Spirit:

(1) On the day of Pentecost, a great crowd listens to Peter Preach. In the crowd there are many of those who had cried out for the blood of Christ and probably some who helped to put Him to death. But when the Holy Spirit falls upon them, they are convicted of sin and they see that Christ is the Son of God. And under deep conviction they cry out, “What must we do?” This same thing happens today. Men go on and on in their sins. They ignore Christ until one day the Holy Spirit convicts them. Then they see their sin and they acknowledge that Christ is the Son of God and that He was crucified by their sin.

- Acts 2:37 - They were pricked in their heart.

(2) Acts 5:33 Peter and the other apostles spoke to the Jewish supreme court, and we are told again “they were cut to the heart.”

(3) Acts 7:54 When Steven, the first recorded Christian martyr, preached about Christ, those who heard him were “cut to the quick.”

(4) Acts 9:5 When Saul was saved on the road to Damascus, Jesus spoke to him and said, “It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

So, it is today when the Holy Spirit convicts a sinner of his lost condition. His heart feels stirred, stung, crushed, heavy with a load of sin

and you yearn for the load to be lifted, and for peace in the heart, and forgiveness of your sins, to be made right with God.

C. Conviction is an Activating Experience

The Spirit's desire is to motivate you to do the only thing you can do to get rid of your sins - come to Jesus.

- When you sense the Holy Spirit stirring your heart to repent of your sins, turn from your sins and turn to God, you must not delay in making that decision.

- If you have experienced the pull of the Holy Spirit to make a decision to get right with God and you failed to do it, do you remember what happened in your heart?

- His conviction left you. He spoke to you, convicted and pulled you to make your decision, but you pushed Him aside and said, "Later."

- Do you remember what happened when you pushed Him aside? He left you.

The conviction and the desire to make the decision was soon gone. That's why we must respond and respond immediately when the Spirit of God works within us. We must make the decision.

The Indians use to describe the convicting of the Spirit like this: It is like a triangle with three sharp points on it, placed in your heart. When you do wrong, the triangle turns around and around in your heart. Each time the sharp points wound the heart. But if you do not pay attention to the sharp points, they will become dull and the points will wear away until you can feel them no more.

II. The Process of Conviction - John 16:9-11

What does the Holy Spirit convict of?

A. The Nature of Sin – John 16:9

He convicts the world of their guilt before God. He presents the evidence in such an overwhelming fashion that even the defendant is compelled at the end of the trial to step up and say, "I admit it. I confess. I am guilty."

Did you notice that the Holy Spirit convicts us of SIN? Not SINS?

- What is the greatest sin against God? Murder? Stealing? Adultery? Rape? Child abuse?

- The greatest sin against God is failure to believe in Christ! To trust Him! It is refusing to believe in Jesus Christ.

Most folks don't believe that refusing to believe in Jesus Christ is the greatest sin. It is the chief of ALL the sins.

- Why? He is God's only begotten Son. He came from heaven to earth to die to pay the sin debt for man. He had no sin of His own, but He became sin for us. Sinful men crucified Him. Not just Herod or Pilate or the Jews of that day, but you and I crucified Him, too.

- What sin does the Holy Spirit convict a lost person of? It is the sin of unbelief.

- The Holy Spirit doesn't have to convict people of the sin of murder (or rape, or adultery, or lying, or cheating, ect.) because just about everybody knows it's wrong to commit murder. Even murderers themselves know that what they are doing is wrong.

- You don't have to convict people that it's wrong to murder folks or rob banks or mug somebody in the park or rape some woman in her home. You don't have to convict people those things are wrong. They know they're wrong. Conscience convicts a lost person of those sins.

- And, yet, the very folks who will admit it's wrong to rape and murder and rob and steal, the same people will say, "Well, there's nothing wrong with not believing in Jesus." I tell you; it is the most horrible sin of all.

Here's what the Holy Spirit does in the life of a lost person. He convicts and convinces by saying to the lost person, "You ought to believe in Jesus. You ought to receive Him as your Savior. You ought to put your faith in Him.

- Do you know what that is? That's the Holy Spirit convincing you of the sin of not believing in Christ. And if you continue to reject that, someday He'll convict of that sin finally and then it's too late.

The great damning sin is to reject Jesus Christ - John 3:17-18, 36; John 5:40, 43a; John 8:24;

Rom. 10:9-10

-To say it another way, the greatest question between God and man is not primarily the sin question, but the Son question for the lost man.

Listen: Conviction is not a bad thing. It's a good thing. It is a demonstration of the love, mercy, and grace of God. If He didn't convict men of sin, none of us would be saved.

B. The Need of Righteousness – John 16:10

Righteousness is the opposite of sin. You see, this is the other side.

- The Holy Spirit not only shows us how bad we are, but He shows us how pure and holy and righteous Jesus is.

One of the greatest mistakes man makes is comparing himself with other men. Then he'll say, "I don't need God. I'm as good and even better than those folks down at the church."

Romans 10:3; Romans 3:23

- The Holy Spirit convinces the world of a new standard of righteousness, which is Christ!
- Look again at John 16:10 and get ready to be blessed. Notice that little phrase, "because I go to my Father and you see me no more."
- Do you know what the greatest proof is that Jesus is totally righteous? It is the fact that God the Father accepted Him into His presence.
- Jesus was on the cross and what did the Father lay on Him? Our sin. He became sin for us.
- But watch this: And Jesus bore that sin away, came out of the grave, and the Father said, "Come on up." And Jesus says, "I can prove my righteousness because the Father accepted me into His presence."
- Can God accept anything in His presence that isn't righteous? No! Habakkuk 1:13a When Jesus entered into the presence of the Father, that was God saying, "You are righteous."

"Well, if we have to be totally perfect, totally righteous, totally right to enter into God's presence, I'll never get there!"

- I want to show you something wonderful. When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, His righteousness is imputed to us and we enter into God's presence just as perfect as Jesus.
- 2 Cor. 5:21 The old hymn says, "I need no other argument, I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me."

C. The Nearness of Judgment – John 16:11

Who is the prince of this world? Satan. When was he judged? At the cross.

Jesus is not talking about future judgment. He's talking about past judgment.

- The Greek word is a perfect passive and it means, Satan has been judged in the past, he continues to be judged and he will be judged in the future. He stands condemned and will one day be condemned to the lake of fire.

Calvary and the resurrection were God's blow on Satan, crushing Him. His judgment was guaranteed.

But Satan's judgment is a kind of judgment on every sinner. Every person who follows him will receive the same judgment as him.

III. The Purpose of Conviction

The Holy Spirit wants to convince us to trust Jesus so God won't have to convict us in the final judgment.

- Let me remind you again that the Spirit's conviction is a sign of God's mercy and grace toward us.

But just being under conviction is not salvation.

- Godly sorrow leads to repentance. Repentance is an action word. It means to turn from your sin and to turn to Jesus.
- What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.
- John 1:12; Isa. 55:6-7

Acts 7:51 If you're lost, God wants you to feel uneasy with your rejection of Christ. There is no sin worse than that.

There is a time, I know not when,
A place, I know not where,
Which marks the destiny of men
To heaven or despair.
There is a line, by us not seen,
Which crosses every path;
Beyond which God Himself has sworn
That he who goes is lost.
One from heaven is sent
To you who from God would depart,
While it is called today, repent,
And harden not your heart.

Don't step over the line! Your destiny is at stake.

A boy left home to work in the city. He promised his mom he would go to church on Sundays. The first Sunday his new friends invited him to go horseback riding. Remembering his promise, he refused at first. But then he relented at their insistence. Sunday morning came. As he began his horseback ride with his new friends, he remembered church back home. He could see his parents heading to the home church and remembered his promise. As he approached the middle of town on horseback, church bells invited him to the

services. He continued to ride.

As he reached the outskirts of town, the bells grew fainter and fainter. He stopped. He said, "Guys, I come from a Christian home. I promised my mom I would go to church today. I noticed the bells are getting fainter the farther we go. A little more and I'll ride beyond the sound of the bells. Excuse me, but I'm going back while I can still hear the bells."

The bells of the Holy Spirit are ringing in your ears. Perhaps you heard them in childhood. The bells are ringing. As a young person, you heard the bells ringing - "Come to Jesus, come to Jesus." Now you're older and wiser. You can still hear the bells, but they are getting weaker. You may be getting close to the point where you'll never hear the bells again. Come to Jesus while you can still hear the bells! Let God's holy jealousy envelop you today.

The Advantage of the Holy Spirit John 15:26-27; 16:7,12-15

Before Reading the Passage:

May I ask you a question as I begin the message? If you could have a choice, had you rather have Jesus sitting beside you right now and be able to see Him and touch Him and talk to Him, or had you rather have the Holy Spirit indwelling you?

-Upon first hearing that question, most of us would probably say that we would want Jesus here with us.

-Yet, Jesus said that it was to our advantage that He return to Heaven so that He could send the Holy Spirit to us.

Read the Passages:

Look again at John 16:7 "It is expedient FOR YOU ... To your advantage...it is FOR your Good...It is Better For you that I return to Heaven where my Father is, so that, the Holy Spirit can come to you." The Holy Spirit, with us and in us, gives us a unique edge.

Why is it better FOR US that Jesus ascend back to His Father so that He could send the Holy Spirit?

1.If Jesus had stayed with the disciples, He could not have died on the cross, shed His blood for our sins, been buried, and raised again to defeat the power of Satan and death. We would still be in our sins.

2.If He had not returned to the Father in Heaven, He could have been in only one place at one time. Now the Holy Spirit is WITH and IN every believer in every place.

Do you remember that occasion when Jesus took His inner circle on the mountain and they witnessed His transfiguration? While Jesus was on the mountain, the rest of the disciples were trying to cast out demons from a young boy, but they could not do it. When Jesus came down from the mountain, He was told by the boy's father that they had come to His disciples and they could not cast the demons out. Jesus rebuked His disciples and told them that He would not always be with them. Then Jesus came to the rescue and bailed them out from their inadequate ministry.

-The Holy Spirit never takes a break, never needs rest, never falls asleep, never gets distracted, and is never inadequate to work in meeting our needs according to His will.

-He assured us, "and lo, I am with you always" and "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

3.If Jesus had not returned to the Father, he could not have been seated at the right hand of the throne of God, making intercession for us.

4.If Christ had remained bodily with His disciples, there would have been far less room for them to exercise their faith and they would have had less opportunity of glorifying God and exhibiting His power in the world.

After Pentecost, the disciples were twice the men they were before the Spirit came. Go to the Book of Acts and you can see the disciple's growth of their knowledge and faith and hope and zeal and courage.

-They did far more for Christ when He was absent than they had ever done when He was present with them.

The Holy Spirit is a worker! He actively works in our lives. Let me tell you of just SOME of the things the Holy Spirit does as He ministers in our life;

I. He Indwells us – John 14:16-18

About 6 months after Janice and I married, I was going to preach on Romans 8:9, 14, 16. I often "Practiced" the sermon on Janice on Saturday night. I asked her, "Janice, how does the Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" She began to cry. She had heard me preach about a personal experience with Jesus and Jesus coming into your heart through the Person of the Holy Spirit. She said, "That has never happened in my life, but I want it to." She was saved.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is THE proof and assurance that you are saved.

-Now let me ask you, how does the Holy Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you belong to Jesus? It's hard to put into words, isn't it?

There are three responses I sometimes encounter when I speak about the indwelling:

A. Ignorance - That is, they are not conscious of the indwelling Spirit

In Acts 19, when Paul went to Ephesus, he "found certain disciples (Acts 19:1) and asked them, "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" They answered, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit."

-If you are not saved, the Holy Spirit does not indwell you, but there are some who are saved and have never been taught about the Holy Spirit and they don't know what you are talking about when you talk about the indwelling.

I have talked to a lot of folks, including preachers, about how they knew they were indwelt by the Spirit.

-Some talked about "feeling the Spirit inside them." I know what they are talking about, but you don't really FEEL the Holy Spirit. He is a spirit. You can't reach out and touch the Spirit.

-Others say that they "sense the Spirit inside of them." That's closer to the truth, but do you sense His presence all the time? If you don't sense His presence, does that mean that He is not there?

Let me try to explain it like this: Here's a house with electric wires running throughout the house and it is connected to the main source of power. There are switches and connectors throughout the house. The power is on all the time, but unless there is need for a light, the switch remains off. If there is no need for a heater or toaster or some other appliance, the current is not activated. You wouldn't know the house had power running through it if you didn't need something to work. Then if you needed power, it is at your disposal.

-As a believer, God's powerful Spirit is always there, within you. When temptation comes, the

Spirit manifest Himself in helping you to resist temptation. When you need to witness, the Spirit empowers you to do so. Whatever you need the Spirit to help you do, He is there.

B. Indifference

We often tend to under-emphasize the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Someone said that if the Holy Spirit ceased His ministry, many dead, cold churches wouldn't know the difference.

C. Indulgence

Some over-emphasize the Holy Spirit or "go to seed" on the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of Christ.

II. He Instructs us – John 14:16-17, 26; John 16:7

The word "Comforter" means "Helper" or "one called alongside to help" by encouraging and exhorting us.

A great preacher in our Convention once told the story of skiing in Colorado, and he noticed on the slopes some people wearing red vest. Wondering who they were, he went closer and read these words on them: BLIND SKIER. He was astounded. If you've ever been skiing or just watched other people ski, you know how hard it must be to ski with two good eyes, much less with no eyesight at all. He wondered to himself, "How do they do it?"

He went to a ski instructor and asked him how a blind person could ski? The answer was fascinating. Each blind skier is given a guide. That guide may ski beside, behind, or in front of the blind person---but always in a place where they could communicate with each other.

He was then told that there are two basic forms of communication this guide will use: the tapping together of ski poles to assure the blind person that the guide was there; and the speaking of simple instructions about what to do next. The guide may say, "Go right, turn left, stop, slow, skier coming up on your right." The only responsibility of the blind skier is to exhibit complete trust and immediate obedience to the instructions of the guide.

III. He Illuminates us – John 14:26; John 16:12-15

The Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, especially concerning the teaching or revealing work of the Spirit.

On one occasion when Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was, Peter responded, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but MY Father who is in Heaven." The whole point is, that Spiritual truth must be revealed to us before we can truly understand and grasp it.

Notice John 16:12. The word "bear" means "to understand fully"

-Divine truth is unique truth. You don't understand God's truth on an academic level. How smart or how intelligent you may be has nothing to do with your ability to understand God's Truth.

-The Bible is God-breathed. It is living, active, and powerful. It is the revelation of the Almighty Creator to His creation. Divine scripture can only be understood when the Divine Author, the Holy Spirit, teaches it to us.

Jesus said that He had many things to teach us, but we cannot bear or understand them now. The idea is that we can't understand them all at one time.

-In common vernacular, Jesus could not unload the whole wagon at one time because the disciples could not handle it! It was necessary for the Holy Spirit to gradually bring the disciples along in understanding truth.

That's encouraging! There are so many things I do not know about the Lord and His ways. Yet, I long to know them. The Lord knows how much I can "bear" at any given time, so He graciously paces me according to my capacity to learn and absorb truth. He gives a little at a time so that I will not just be gathering facts, but learning truth and living truth.

-We all learn at different rates, but here's what you need to see: The Lord will not give us further truth until we have learned and applied what He has already given us. Why give us further truth if we have not obeyed and applied what He has already given us!

"He guides us" means He lovingly puts His hand out to gently and gradually show us the way.

-It is actually a picture of a guide introducing a traveler to an unknown country.

-As we step into the depths of scripture, we are not going alone. The Holy Spirit comes along side us and announces and unfolds the truths of Christ.

The Spirit has a unique way of speaking truth to our hearts and minds. We may have read a passage a thousand times, then suddenly, we see something new that we've never seen before. It's almost like a spiritual light comes on. It's like, someone slipped the truth in while I was not looking!

That's what makes God's Word so exciting! He is constantly showing us new truths, and no matter how many times we drop our spiritual pail into the ocean of His Word, we'll never hit bottom. There's always more!

The Holy Spirit always shines the spotlight on Jesus! He always glorifies our wonderful Lord Jesus!

Sorrow Turned to Joy and Peace

John 16:16-33

I remind you that our Lord is only about two hours from being arrested. Throughout this whole "Upper Room Discourse" our Lord is trying to bring comfort to His disciples.

-From John 13 and through John 17, which is the "Upper Room Discourse," Jesus deals with sorrowful things and then comes back with comforting things.

-Jesus has said that one of the disciples would betray Him, that Peter would deny Him, that He would be put to death, and that the disciples would be persecuted.

-On the positive side, Jesus washes the disciples' feet, He comforts their hearts by saying that although He would be put to death, He would go to His Father, prepare a dwelling place for them, and return to get them and carry them to the place He has prepared for them. He promises to send One just like Himself, the Holy Spirit, who would be with them and in them to comfort, guide, and teach them while He was away from them. He encourages them to love one another deeply, for their love one for another would benefit them greatly when hard times do come.

Two main themes Jesus will deal with:

I. Sorrow Will Be Turned to Joy – John 16:16-24

Joy is a word that is not easily defined. Webster defines joy as "a very glad feeling; great pleasure; delight."

-While these terms certainly describe joy, the Christian explanation has a much deeper dimension. I would put it like this, Joy is the disposition of the heart and mind of the one who delights singularly in the Lord. It is displayed in the temperament of a person and affects the whole person. Joy begins within and permeates the whole of one's life.

I say again that Joy flows from being in a right relationship to the Living God and a singular delight in Him.

This Joy is found in many places in scripture:

- Ps.37:4; Ps. 30:5
- Habakkuk 3:17-19
- Phil. 4:4-7

Unhappy Christians are a poor recommendation of the Christian faith.

-Can we really live in joy in this world? Is it possible for us to live in pure, abundant, boundless joy?

Though sorrowing is very real to us, our Lord promises such sorrowing will turn to joy.

John 16:16-20 confusing: "A little while and you don't see me and a little while and you will see me".

- "In a little while you will not see me in my physical form, for I will die and ascend unto my Father, BUT you will see me in my spiritual form, because I will send my Holy Spirit to you.

Notice the last part of John 16:20. Jesus is not saying that Joy will replace sorrow, but that sorrow will be turned into Joy.

-Jesus is saying that the very event that caused you sorrow and grief will be the very event that causes you joy.

-The cross will cause you sorrow and grief and when the cross is all over, the cross will be your cause of joy. The cross is our source of joy!

● In John 19 there was sorrow when Jesus was on the cross; in John 20 there was gladness, excitement and joy because Jesus was risen from the dead.

● In Luke 24 the men on the Road to Emmaus were sad until our risen Lord joined them and began to talk with them and then they said that their hearts burned within them when He walked with them.

● A family member dies at a young age and there is sadness and no glimmer of good, but 3 or 4 months later, that person's death caused several to be saved and then you say, "Now, I can see the wonder of God's grace in this thing."

Jesus uses an illustration in John 16:21-22. A woman is in labor and the pain is so great that she declares she will never have another child, but as soon as the child is delivered, she remembers no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world.

-John 16:24 Your joy will be Fully Satisfied, filled to the brim, and abundant.

II. Sorrow Will Be Turned into Peace – John 16:33

Notice the powerful little phrase "in me." It is the theme of the apostle Paul, who used the phrase about 160 times.

-When we confess Jesus Christ is Lord, He comes to live within us by the Holy Spirit. We are in Christ and Christ is in us, and from that moment He meets every need in our lives both for time and eternity.

● From that moment: All our sins are forgiven; we have eternal life; we have an abundant life; we are going to Heaven; He has a purpose for us.

We will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

My faith has found a resting place,

not in device or creed;

I trust the ever living One,

His blood availed for me.

I need no other argument,

I need no other plea;

It is enough that Jesus died,

and that He died for me.

The Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed

John 17

Listen! Jesus is Praying!

No one ever prayed like Jesus prayed! No one ever prayed as often as Jesus prayed! Jesus gave parables about prayer. Jesus gave instructions about prayer when His disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray."

-Jesus is God the Son praying to God the Father. Well, if Jesus was God, why did He pray to God? Because He knew the Father and He knew how important it is to pray.

-Think about it: If God the Son prayed so often to God the Father, doesn't that tell you that WE should pray often to the Father? That's why Paul encourages us to pray without ceasing.

You can read this prayer in less than four minutes, and yet, it is the greatest recorded prayer ever prayed.

-Prayers do not have to be long to be powerful or meaningful or rich. The important thing about prayer is real communion with God!

Jesus could have prayed this prayer silently and we never would have known what He said. I think He prayed out loud to reveal what was in His heart concerning His Father and to let us know that He intended to follow the Father's will to the end so that the Father would

be glorified and we could be forgiven of our sin because redemption's price would be fully paid. He also wanted us to know that when we trusted Him, He will keep us secure in Him until He receives us in glory.

I think the disciples listened reverently as our Lord prayed and they never forgot that prayer.

I said that this prayer is the greatest prayer ever prayed. Why is that so?

1. It is great because of who prayed it.

There is no other voice in Heaven or in earth that is more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more powerful, more sublime than the voice of the Son of God who offered up this prayer.

-The words of the prayer are plain, yet majestic. Simple, yet mysterious.

-It is as though we approach the very throne of God with our Christ. It is like the veil is drawn back and we are escorted into the Holy of Holies.

-Only God the Son could ask the Father to glorify Him as Jesus did in verse one.

2. It is great because of the occasion that demanded the prayer.

Jesus was about to die on the cross. John 17:1 says, "Father, the hour is come." Six times in John's Gospel, John records Jesus as saying, "My hour has not come"; Now, He says, "Father, the hour has come."

-Notice John 17:4 Jesus always finished the work the Father gave Him to do. On the cross He said, "It is finished."

-The first recorded words of Jesus were, "I must be about my Father's business." His last words before His death were, "It is finished."

3. It is great because of the petitions in the prayer.

Prayer that asks nothing accomplishes nothing.

Thou are coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring,
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.

The prayer can be divided like this:

A. Jesus prayed for Himself – John 17:1-5

B. Jesus prayed for His disciples – John 17:6-19

C. Jesus prayed for the whole church – John 17:20-26

4. It is great because we get to hear on earth what He is praying on our behalf at the right side of the Throne in Heaven

Let that soak in! We are humbled as we get to listen in on God's Son as He speaks with His Heavenly Father before the hour that He gives His life a ransom for mankind.

-Heb. 7:25

I. He Prays for His Glorification – John 17:1,4

The focal point of this prayer is the cross. Everything flows from that. It is His finished work on the cross that will glorify the Father.

-In John 17:1 Jesus says, "glorify Thy Son." The very event that would glorify the Son was His death!

-By His death, He has received the adoration, worship, and love of millions whose sins He bore.

-He accepted this path to glory, knowing that by it He would be exalted to the Father.

-The goal is that the Father may be glorified for His redemptive plan in the Son. So, He sought by His own glory the glory of His Father.

II. He Prays for Our Preservation – John 17:6-11

Salvation is God's gift and maintaining it is His responsibility.

-That doesn't mean you and I can do as we please. If salvation is a reality in your life and mine, there will be a hunger for righteousness and clean living. Anyone who claims to be saved but who doesn't exhibit a clean life is deceived and needs to be born again.

However, even the redeemed fall into sin occasionally. When we do, we are convicted and chastened by the Lord, but we are not removed from His family. Salvation is eternal!

-We are kept by the Father AND by the Son. Nothing can loosen us from His grip!

-I am so grateful that it is not my responsibility to keep myself saved! I am weak, but he is strong!

III. He Prays for Our Protection – John 17:12, 15

Satan hates God, but he knows he is no match for God. The best way for him to hurt God is to hurt His children. You know that from being a parent. The thing that hurts me most is not something that is done to me, but the evil that is done to those I love.

-We are in a battle. The devil hates us, opposes and often attacks us. I am grateful that I have the Lord's promise of protection and of His presence. When the devil comes after us, the Lord takes up our defense.

-I Peter 5:8 The devil roars, but he cannot touch the child of the King! Col. 3:3 says that our life is hidden in Christ.

-Satan's plan for the saint of God is to Divide them, Divert them, Disable them, Discourage them, and Destroy them.

-God has provided protection from the evil one – Eph. 6:10-11

IV. He Prays for Our Purity – John 17:16-19

“Sanctify” means to set them apart, to make them holy, to make them pure, to make them more spiritual, more loving, more useful.

-God wants us to hate what He hates and to love what He loves.

V. He Prays for Our Perception – John 17:22-23

What an amazing thing. God the Father loves us as much as He does His own dear Son! Several years ago, Bill Gaither wrote a song entitled, “We Are Loved.” In that song, he began with the expression of a person who has never come to a realization of the extent of the love of God.

“I said, “If you knew, you wouldn't want me;

My scars are hidden by the face I wear.

He said, “My child, my scars go deeper;

It was love for you that put them there.”

Then comes a wonderful realization of the extent of God's love!

“I am loved, I am loved, I can risk loving you;

For the One who knows me best, loves me most,

I am loved, I am loved, won't you please take my hand,

We are free to love each other, we are loved.”

The teachings of this request of Jesus is overwhelming. The statement He makes regarding the extent to which God loves us is almost beyond comprehension. Jesus is teaching us that God the Father loves the followers of Jesus as much as He loves Jesus. Imagine that!

VI. He Prays for Our Coronation – John 17:24-26

Look at the phrase in John 17:24 “Be with Me ...where I am.” It is the same phrase used in John 14:3 “that where I am, there ye may be also.”

It is overwhelming to think that Jesus Christ would want to spend eternity with us.

What is the place like where we will spend eternity with Jesus? Jesus summed it up in the word “Paradise”.

Notice John 17:24 “That they may behold My glory”

-Jesus not only wanted His followers “to be with Him where He was”, He wanted His followers to be able to “behold My glory.”

-This is the ultimate experience for a child of God. This is the greatest moment for a Christian. There is an indescribable delight that awaits all who have given themselves in faith to Jesus Christ.

-“That they may behold My Glory, which Thou hast given me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:24

-Think about it We are not only going to heaven, we are not only going to be where He is, we are going to behold Him in all of His glory.

A Glimpse into the Heart of Jesus

John 17:1-5

John 13 -17 is the Upper Room Discourse of our Lord. All that is said and done in these five chapters takes place within a 24-hour time span.

-Jesus spends most of the first four chapters talking to the disciples about the Father; now Jesus will talk to the Father about His disciples.

What do you think God the Son would say to God the Father the night before He would offer Himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world?

Imagine with me for a moment what the divine communication between God the Father and God the Son must be like. What deep and profound conversation must have taken place; too profound for us to comprehend.

-Isaiah 55:8-9

God allows us in John 17 to listen in on God the Son talking to God the Father in some of the most profound truths in the revelation of God to man. We hear in these words an example of the divine communication that constantly passed between the Father and the Son while He was on earth.

-In simple sentences Jesus prays to the Father a prayer of consecration and total devotion and dedication of Himself for the sacrifice at Calvary. We need to sit in silence and ponder in reverence as Jesus opens His heart and expresses it to His Father.

-Jesus lifts His eyes to heaven and prays, being both High priest and the substitutionary sacrifice on the alter. He is both the Lamb of God that would lift up and carry away the sin of the world, and the one perfect priest who did not have to first make an offering for His own sin, because He never experienced personal sin.

Nowhere do we see the heart of our Savior more clearly than in John 17 as we have opportunity to listen to Him pray.

Four truths I would point out:

I. Our Lord's Reverence – John 17:1

“And lifted up His eyes to heaven” We don't know if our Lord was kneeling or standing when He offered this prayer, but we do know that He “lifted up His eyes to heaven.”

-Most people bow their heads and close their eyes when they pray, but Jesus lifted His head and focused His eyes on heaven.

Many different postures are recorded in the Bible, and all of them are acceptable.

The Jews were accustomed to lifting up their hands, palms turned up, open to God, expecting to receive something! Some today fold their hands when they pray, but I don't find that practice anywhere in scripture.

Some people bowed their knees when they pray, as Jesus did when He prayed in Gethsemane (Luke 22:41).

-We are told in Matt. 26:39 that Jesus fell on His face as He talked to His Father.

-King David sat when he talked to God and Abraham stood when he interceded for Sodom (Gen. 18:22).

-The important thing is the posture of the heart. It is much easier to bow the knees than to bow the heart in submission.

The first petition that Jesus offers is for Himself. There are those who think it is selfish to pray for ourselves. At times it is, but it is not always the case. Throughout scripture, we are encouraged to pray for ourselves.

-If we are going to be saved, it is necessary for us to pray something like this, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.”

-We are also encouraged to pray for ourselves by the very example of Jesus. There are times when the best way to pray for others is to pray for ourselves.

-In John 17, Jesus uses the first five verses to pray for Himself, but the next 21 verses to pray for others.

A wise and beautiful prayer begins like this:

“Help me to live from day to day,

In such a self-forgetful way,

That even when I kneel to pray,

My prayer will be for others.”

II. Our Lord's Relationship – John 17:1

Four times Jesus said, “Father”; two other times He calls Him “Holy Father” (John 17:11) and “Righteous Father” (John 17:25).

-The word reveals relationship as a child to its parent. It is the close relationship of fellowship and intimacy of the Father – Son.

-In verses one and two Jesus uses the third person, calling Himself “Thy Son” and “the Son”; Not merely “Me” and “I”. Jesus uses such language to indicate His deity and eternal relation to His Father.

We address the Father, of course, because prayer is based on sonship.

-We hear people address their prayers to the Son and even to the Holy Spirit. Is this wrong?

When Steven gave his life for Christ, he saw Jesus in heaven and addressed his prayer to Him: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” (Acts 7:59). I know of no prayer in the Bible addressed to the Holy Spirit. Since our prayers are addressed to God, and since Father and Son and Holy Spirit are all in the Godhead, technically we can address our prayers to each of them. However, the biblical pattern seems to be that we pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, and through the Holy Spirit.

III. Our Lord's Realization – John 17:1

“The hour has come”; “the time has come”; “it's time”.

"It's time" may mean something wonderful, like the hour of your wedding or the hour of your graduation or the career of your life begins or it may be the hour of your death when you slip into eternity, either arriving on the golden shores of Heaven or engulfed in the flames of an eternal, burning Hell where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched.

Jesus says to His Father, "It's time. The hour is come."

-Jesus is speaking about the time He had been looking forward to all His life.

-In this hour, the Son of God would end the work of His earthly life by His death.

-In this hour, the dread of Satan's vengeance would be unleashed in full fury upon the life of Jesus Christ.

-In this hour, man's wicked vileness would be exposed as the children of darkness would do their worst and nail the perfect Son of God to the cross.

-In this hour, Christ's love would be confirmed as God's stamp, "PAID IN FULL", would be applied on the sin debt of believers in Christ as the Just would die for the unjust.

IV. Our Lord's Request

Jesus makes seven requests in this prayer FOR OTHERS; but only one major request for Himself.

Jesus DID NOT ask for power to die or for a lightening of the load He was expected to carry or for encouragement in any shape or form.

-Jesus was not alarmed by the cross with its suffering, He saw only a means of glorifying God. His prayer was, "Father, do this for me that I might be able to do more for Thee."

Our Lord never stole the limelight, and even when crowds of people wanted to sing praises to Him, He withdrew to the hillside to meet God.

A. Jesus asked the Father to glorify Him so He could continue to glorify His Father.

Jesus was looking ahead to the cross.

-The cross was the glory of Jesus because He was never more magnificent and majestic than in His death.

-By going to the cross, Jesus showed there is no limit to God's love for us. Jesus demonstrated there was nothing the love of God was not willing to do and suffer for our salvation and redemption.

Jesus has glorified His Father in His Person (Heb. 1:3), glorified Him by His miracles (Matt. 9:8), glorified Him by His words by constantly ascribing all praise to Him (Matt. 11:25), but above all He had glorified Him by His holy life.

-The last place men would look for the glory of God would be at the cross; yet, the Father is glorified when we turn from our sins and put our faith in Jesus as our Savior because of His sacrifice on the cross.

-Jesus went to the cross the next day knowing that His death would secure the salvation of all whom God had given Him.

B. Jesus glorified the Father by finishing the work the Father gave Him to do – John 17:4.

Jesus completed the work. No one but Jesus Christ could have accepted this assignment and completed it successfully. The great work of salvation demanded the perfect sacrifice, the Spotless Lamb of God.

-Jesus finished the work. Nothing can be added to it and we dare take nothing from it.

-Our Lord finished the work of redemption on the cross, rose again, returned to heaven and sat down on the right side of the Father on His throne.

C. The Father glorifies the Son by giving Him those the Father has chosen to be saved.

John 17:2

"Father, I have given eternal life to all those you have given me because I have finished the work you gave me to do."

One of the great mysteries of the Bible is that we have been chosen by God. In fact, we can't even come to Jesus unless the Father chooses us first. John 6:44

-You say, "But I thought we received eternal life by believing on Jesus Christ." John 3:16

-Is it by believing or is it by God's choice? John 6:37-40 (Notice: "All that the Father giveth...and believeth on Him.")

Here we see it all kind of put together. The Father “gives” a person to Jesus, but eternal life comes when a person responds by “believing” in Jesus. John 3:35-36; John 10:28

“What if I’m not one of the “chosen” ones?” You’ll never know unless you choose to believe. If you believe, you’re chosen. If you don’t believe, it doesn’t prove anything, other than you just haven’t believed yet.

No, I don’t understand all of that, but I know God understands that and I know that “whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

D. Jesus asked that His glory be resumed that He enjoyed before the creation of the world. John 17:5

Jesus possessed and manifested the same glory with God before He became flesh.

-Phil. 2:7 speaks of His laying aside, temporarily, His visible glory but not His deity. That means that Jesus used to live in Heaven before He became the God-man.

-Now, Jesus is going back Home, receiving back the glory He had laid aside to minister on earth.

O, the joy of it! “Father, glorify thou Me, not with crowns or jewels; Not with earthly honors, but surround Me again with the intricate glory and wonder of Thine own dear presence. Let Me know again the intimate fellowship and glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”

One day we shall behold Him in all His glory!

What Is Eternal Life?

John 17:1-3

Before Reading the passage

Queen Victoria of England attended Saint Paul's Cathedral one Sunday and something gripped her heart. The next day she wrote the chaplain a note that read, “can one be absolutely sure in this life of eternal safety?” The chaplain wrote in response, “I know of no way that one can be absolutely sure of his eternal safety in this life.”

Her question and the chaplain's answer were published in the court news. The article came to the attention of a very humble pastor named John Townson. After reading the queen's request and the sorry answer she received from the chaplain, John Townson, knowing the risk of confronting the Queen, decided to respond himself. So, he sent her the following note:

“To her most gracious majesty and our beloved Queen Victoria, from one of her most humble servants, with trembling hands and heartfelt love, and because I know that we can be absolutely sure now of our eternal life in that home where the Lord Jesus went to prepare, may I ask your most precious majesty to read the following passages of scripture: John 3:16; John 17:3, and Romans 10:9-10. These passages prove that there is full assurance of salvation by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ for those who believe and accept His finished work.

I sign myself, your servant for Jesus sake, John Townson.”

He did not know what to expect and he was afraid that he might have offended the Queen. He hoped she would respond immediately, but two weeks went by with no word. And then, finally, he got this note from Queen Victoria. It said, “To John Townson, your letter of recent date received and in reply would state that I carefully and prayerfully read the portions of scripture referred to. I believe now in the finished work of Jesus Christ for me and trust by God's grace to meet you in that home of which He said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” Signed, Victoria.”

God has not only made provisions for us to be saved, He has made provisions for us to know with assurance that we are saved and belong to Him.

Read the Passage:

John is not only the Apostle of Love, he is also the Apostle of Life. The word “life” is found 36 times in his gospel.

-The reason John wrote his Gospel is that we might know how we can have eternal life and know it. John 20:30-31; I John 5:12-13

Jesus used the word “life” to describe Himself and what He gives to those He redeems.

John 11:25; John 14:6; Col. 3:4; Phil. 1:21

-Our greatest need is eternal life through the forgiveness of our sins.

Three things I want to share with you:

I. Our Entrance into Eternal Life – John 17:3

What does it mean to have eternal life?

1. Some believe that eternal life is only an Extension of life or that a person will live forever.

Did you know that when the Bible talks about eternal life, it is not talking about living forever?

-I've heard preachers say, "If you want to live forever, trust Christ!" Listen, everyone is going to live somewhere forever. Even the lost will live somewhere forever.

-2 Thess. 1:9 is a picture of Hell. Paul says those without Christ will "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

-Over and over again the Book of Revelation talks about the lost person, separated from God, in an ever-living, ever-dying state.

Not a dead state; not a destroyed state, but living in torment in an ever-living, never-dying state.

2. Eternal life is not in a Place; it's in a Person – John 17:3

Some folk think, "Well, just let me in Heaven and slam the door." Satan was in Heaven before he rebelled and tried to take God's throne and God kicked him out of Heaven.

No. Salvation is in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Eternal life is the life of God in the soul of man!

-2 Peter 1:4 says that we are partakers of God's nature or life.

What is eternal life? John 17:3 says it is knowing God through Jesus Christ.

There are three meanings to the Greek word translated "know."

a. It means to be aware

It's what we have in mind when we say that we know the United States is governed by a president. We don't know all the details of it. We are aware of it because we were taught it in school.

b. The second meaning involves Information

We are not only aware that the United States has a president, but we have gathered information about the working of our government.

c. The word "know" in John 17:3 is a knowledge that is best described in terms of relationship.

This relationship is with "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

-The word "know" is a present tense verb, which means that our knowledge of Him continues and continues. He is referring to a personal, intimate relationship with the living God, which grows as the years come and go.

-He does not mean that we know ABOUT God, rather we know God. This intimate relationship develops by our trust, obedience, worship, prayer, meditation and study of His word.

The life of Moses will help us to understand what is meant here:

Moses was AWARE of God when he was growing up. He had godly parents who taught him about God and learned of God's promise to deliver His people from bondage.

Then Moses met God. He encountered God at the burning bush. He learned several things about God:

1. God revealed His Holiness to Moses. Standing before the burning bush God said, "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals. You are standing on holy ground, for I am here!"

2. Moses learned of his own sinfulness in the presence of God, for we are told that Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

-Have you ever been disturbed, knowing that God knows all about you, including your sin, and that one day you will give an account to Him for your sin?

3. Moses learned that God is sovereign and that he knows and sees all.

-God told Moses that he had seen the affliction of His people and heard their cry.

Now back to John 17:3: Knowing God is an intimate, life-changing encounter in which you confess your sins to Him, invite Him to come into your life to take control of your life in a personal way and confess Him as Lord of your life.

It's more than just knowing ABOUT Jesus. The devils know about Jesus and tremble, but they are not saved. Salvation is knowing and trusting Jesus personally and allowing Him to be Lord of your life.

II. The Essence of Eternal Life – John 17:2

Eternal life is not something you can earn. It is a gift. Rom. 6:23

-Notice John 17:2 "That He (Christ) should GIVE eternal life." It is a gift! What kind of gift is it? It is:

1. An Expensive Gift

It is a free gift, but it is not a cheap gift. It is the most expensive gift ever given, for it cost God's Son His life.

2. An Eternal Gift

Unlike most gifts we receive, which break or wear out, eternal life gets better and better as the years move on.

3. An Essential Gift

Everybody needs it. It is the only gift suitable for everyone, for everyone needs it.

4. An Expressive gift

Some gifts are given out of obligation or guilt, but eternal life is given as expression of the Father's great love for us.

5. An Exclusive Gift

The only way to receive this gift is to ask for it. Though it is offered to all, it must be received.

III. The Experience of Eternal Life

Eternal life is two-dimensional.

A. Eternal Life is a Full Life

The idea of eternal life does not simply refer to one day going to heaven. Yes, It includes that, but Jesus spoke of eternal life as a present reality. He said, "this IS eternal life"; not this shall be eternal life. There is much to come, but there is so much now!

-John 10:10 In eternal life Jesus Christ is giving us something of His life which He experienced in perfect fullness while upon earth. He lived as a man in dependence upon and delight in the Father.

-The same joy, peace, and life which he spoke of is that same fullness which He gives us. He is bringing some of heaven into our own souls so that we might get a foretaste of the glories ahead.

1. It means Enjoyment

We have a new companionship, a partnership, a relationship, a fellowship with God. We are never alone, for He is always with us. We can tell Him our problems as well as share our joys.

2. It means Enlargement

Life in Christ gives life new meaning. Life becomes fuller, more positive, more exciting. You have a better outlook on life. You have a greater appreciation for life because life holds more for you.

3. It means Enrichment – I Cor. 2:9-10

Eternal life is not just for the future, but for now as well.

B. Eternal Life is an Enduring Life

What God has started in us, He will never stop! We will go on forever in His presence.

-John 17:24

Whatever heaven is like, it will be the most God-centered, God-glorifying, God-honoring, God-focused place in eternal existence! God's throne is the center of it. The Father and the Son illuminate it with their glory. And we shall see Him as He is! We will have human bodies that have been fitted for glory, just like the body of our Lord Jesus. We shall bear the glorious image of Jesus Christ upon us forever.

May I ask you: Do you have eternal life?

Jesus Prays for Our Security

John 17:11-12, 15

Before Reading the passage:

Once again, we are privileged to kneel with the disciples as their Master and our Master leads us to the throne of grace.

-Jesus prays out loud so His disciples will know what He prays for them. He wants to encourage them. In praying for His disciples, He prays for us also.

-This prayer also tells us what Jesus is praying for us even now as He sits at the right hand of His Father.

Jesus makes seven requests for His disciples and for us:

- 1.He prays for our security -John 17:11-12
- 2.He prays that we will be joyful – John 17:13
- 3.He prays that we will live holy lives – John 17:14-16
- 4.He prays for our sanctification – John 17:17-21
- 5.He prays for our unity – John 17:22-23
- 6.He prays for our home-going – John 17:24
- 7.He prays that we will love – John 17:25-26

Now we come to our Lord's first request for us:

Read the passage

Everyone likes to feel secure. This is true in our relationships, our finances, and our jobs. While security is valuable in all these areas, there is no security that brings greater delight than a security in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Baptist have long been identified as those who believe in the eternal security of our salvation through Jesus Christ. We have held this doctrine high even in the face of criticism and scorn of other groups.

-We do need to make sure that we understand what we mean by the eternal security of the believer.

1.Only those who have been genuinely born again are secure in Christ.

-I say that because some have a false security. They made a decision, they joined a church, they were baptized, they even wrote the date of when they made their decision in their Bible, because some preacher told them to do so and if they ever doubted their salvation, they could look back at that date and have assurance that they were saved.

-I think it's good thing to write the date of when you were saved down somewhere, but here is my point: If you are basing your assurance on something EXTERNAL, that really has nothing to do with salvation.

-There needs to be an inner witness of the Holy Spirit of a Spiritual reality in a person's life. When genuine salvation takes place there is both an inward and an outward evidence – Rom. 8:9, 14, 16; 2 Cor. 5:17

The Bible makes it very clear that those who are genuinely saved are kept saved by the power of God – John 6:37-40; I Peter 1:5; Jude 1, 24; Phil. 1:6

Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before;

Every day with Jesus, I love Him more and more;

Jesus saves and keeps me, And He's the one I'm living for:

Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before.

I would remind you that although you can never lose your salvation if you genuinely saved, you can lose blessings and rewards if you go away from Him.

I. The Request of the Prayer – John 17:11-12, 15

Jesus has just said that He is going to die, be raised from the dead, and ascent into heaven. He is going to leave this world physically, but His disciples are going to remain. They are not going anywhere, not just yet. Jesus is going to the Father, into Heaven, in contrast to the disciples who are staying behind.

Notice John 17:11 Jesus is praying, "Father, keep them secure and keep them united."

One of Satan's greatest methods of making the church ineffective is by causing disunity and divisions among the body.

-Psalm 133:1-2 We're actually all on the same team. It's not that we can't have disagreements, it's just that we all need to be heading in the same direction, walking with Jesus.

A pastor tells about being a part of the Rotary club in his town. One time the club decided to have a "bring your competition" meeting,

as a way of increasing their membership. Some of the guys asked the pastor, "Who are you going to bring, the pastor at the other Baptist Church or the minister at the Methodist Church?" The Pastor replied, "Those guys aren't my competition. They're on the same side I'm on. I'm going down to the corner bar and bring the bartender."

-Sometimes one of the greatest things to accomplish in marriage counseling is to get the husband and wife to realize that they're really on the same side!

The disciples were quite a diverse group. Several of them were simple fisherman. One was a tax collector for the Roman government. One was a political activist, a Zealot, dedicated to the overthrow of the Roman government. Even on the very night Jesus prayed this prayer,

Luke 22:24 says there was a strife among the disciples as to which was the greatest!

Now notice the prayer of Jesus: He doesn't pray for their removal from the world, but for their keeping!

-Jesus takes this little group He loves so much and puts them into the father's hands!

-Jesus doesn't ask that these men will have an easy time of it or that they be exempt from conflicts, sufferings, or hurts. He wants them and us to remain in the world, for it is in the world where the need is. The world is where the heartache is; where the corruption is; where the wrongs and injustices are!

"Father, I don't pray that you will take them out of the world, but that you will keep them from the evil one while they are in the world."

The word "keep" or "kept" is found four times in these verses. It speaks of keeping something safe and secure, to guard or to act as a guard.

Jesus prays that the Father would keep the disciples and us FROM something and IN something.

A. "Keep them From the evil one and From the world (the world system)."

The word "world" is found 34 times in John 13-17. He is talking about the world system under Satan's control.

-I John 2:15-16

-He will not remove us From the world; We will Remain IN the world, but we are not to be OF the world.

-It is not a problem if a boat is IN the water, but there is a great problem if the water is IN the boat. We are IN the world, but we are not to be OF the world.

Jesus doesn't pray for the disciple's COMFORT, but He is very interested in their CHARACTER!

What does it mean to be kept, guarded, watched over, cared for, separated from the world, kept in the Father's name? It has to do with the name and the nature of the Father.

-God described His name and nature to Moses: Exodus 34:5-7a

-Now compare what Paul says mature believers are to be like: Col. 3:12-17

Any problem could be worked out between two people if we would just put this into practice.

II. The Reflection in the Prayer – John 17:12

What about Judas? Did Jesus fail to keep Judas safe? Let me share quickly four facts about Judas:

1. Judas was not a believer – John 6:64
2. Judas had never been cleaned – John 13:11
3. Judas was not one of the chosen – John 13:18
4. In this sense, Judas was never "given" to Christ – John 18:8-9

Judas is an example of an unbeliever who pretended to have salvation. He was a Professor but not a Possessor!

III. The Reason for the Prayer

1. They were in desperate need of the Father's keeping.

They were now alone, without the presence of Jesus, in a hostile world.

-It was because of our Lord's unworldliness that the world hated Him.

Jesus told them that if they were of the world, the world would love them, but because they were not of the world, the world would hate them.

-Jesus told them that He had overcome the world, and He wants the same victory for His own because yielding to the world spells disaster.

2. Jesus asked the Father to keep them and us because He knows our weakness.

When the Lord saved us, He did not make us perfect. He continues to work grace in us each day, shaping us in the image of Christ, until one day we will stand before His throne in the perfect likeness of our Lord. But until that time, we are full of imperfections and weaknesses.

-We have a New nature and New desires and we are on our way to Heaven, but we have not arrived.

-Our Natural tendency is toward weakness. The only good within us is that which the Lord has deposited within us.

3. Jesus asked the Father to keep us because of the strong external influences around us that would rob us of our faith.

Satan will attack us and unless the Lord maintains His keeping grace upon our lives, we will fall.

4. Jesus asked the Father to keep us because there is nothing more precious or more valuable than a soul fitted for Heaven through Christ – 2 Tim. 1:12, 14

5. Jesus prays this prayer so that we might bring glory to the Father's name.

“As the Father has sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.” They and we have a definite work to do. We are to be Salt and Light in the world and the work can only be done if we are kept clean in Him.

6. As Jesus prays to his Father, He reminds Him that we belong to Him.

He has an obligation to His own. His faithfulness demands that he keep us.

Why is it so important for the Father to answer our Lord's prayer to keep us; to keep us secure?

Because if any believer – just one – should lose his salvation, God would lose far more than the one who lost his salvation!

-If a man lost his salvation, he would lose his soul, but God would lose far more. He would lose His glory! His very glory and integrity are at stake!

The believer doesn't deserve salvation. It is God's gift of grace! But God does deserve to be glorified, because He's God!

Phil. 1:6

Jesus Prays That We Will Be Joyful

John 17:13; John 15:11; I John 1:4

Did you see what Jesus prayed for every born-again believer? JOY! And NOT just any kind of Joy, HIS Joy!!

That is the opposite of what the world thinks and of what many Christians think as well.

-Some folk feel like the more miserable they are, the more pleasing they are to God!

-Some think it is God's will for them to be gloomy and sour!

-Some are desperately afraid of anything that gives pleasure or joy, because it must be sinful. I mean, if we are having fun and laughing and having a good time, it must be sinful.

Now there are a lot of ways to be happy. I came across a Chinese proverb that says: “If you wish to be happy for one hour, get intoxicated. If you wish to be happy for three days, get married. If you wish to be happy for eight days, kill your pig and eat it. If you wish to be happy forever, learn to fish.”

Well, Jesus isn't talking about happiness, because happiness is determined upon what's happening around us. Jesus is talking about Joy; joy that comes whatever circumstance we find ourselves!

The word “joy” and similar terms like rejoice, glad, gladness, are used over 130 times in the N.T.

-In the N.T. the verb which means “to rejoice” is found 72 times. The noun which means “joy” is found 60 times.

The Bible is a Book of Joy:

- Deut. 12:12 “Rejoice before the Lord your God.”
- Neh. 8:10 “The joy of the Lord is my strength.”
- Psalm 16:11 “In your presence there is fullness of joy.”
- Psalm 118:24 “This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”
- Luke 2:10 When Jesus was born, the angels declared, “I bring you good tidings of great Joy!”
- Phil. 4:4 Paul was in prison and he exhorted his readers, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say it, Rejoice!”

It is not the Lord's will that we be gloomy and sour folks!

-Jesus is in the shadow of the cross; death's chilly breath is blowing upon Him; yet, He talks about His joy.

Jesus gave the Beatitudes – the attitudes that are to be in each one of us, and He said, “Blessed are...” or “O, the blessedness.”

-When He talks about being persecuted for His sake, He says, “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.”

-One of our Lord's favorite expressions is, “Be of good cheer.”

Remember that after praying that we will be kept in the Father's name, and that we live together in unity, our Lord prays for our joyfulness.

Three things I want to share with you:

I. The Request for Joyfulness

Why did Jesus want His disciples and us to have a joyful heart?

1. Because He loves us

How many things do we do for our children or grandchildren, not because they are absolutely necessary, but because we want to make them glad; we want to make them smile; we want to see the twinkle in their eye; we want to see their loving response.

-Jesus said, “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.”

-God delights to do us good because He loves us!

2. Joy is a great safeguard against temptation.

If your heart is empty of joy, that's when you are most likely to look for something else, and maybe something undesirable, to fill your heart.

-If your heart is filled with joy and contentment and satisfaction, undesirable things may come knocking at your door, but you are not likely to answer.

-You see that in marriages. When a husband and wife find joy in each other, their relationship is safe. It's when they begin to neglect each other and stop bringing joy and fulfillment to each other that the problems start.

3. The joy of the Lord is our strength for winning others to Him.

I wonder if anyone has ever been won to the Lord by a soured, joyless disciple.

-Remember the Elder brother? Hear him complain to his father: “Lo, these many years have I served you and you never gave me a party and killed the fatted calf.” I don't think anyone came to him and asked him to introduce them to his father.

-I wonder if anyone wants to meet our Savior with the kind of attitude and spirit we possess.

II. The Reality of Joylessness

We can lose our joy without losing our salvation. Psalm 51:12 says, “Restore unto me the joy of Thou Salvation.”

-Often you can see the lack of joy on the countenance of a person. Stand where I stand on Sundays and look into the faces of folks, and if what's in their hearts is expressed on their face, they need joy!

-Joy is the surest sign of the presence of the Lord.

Do you know what I've learned? Some folks are bothered by your joy.

-I'm up most of the time. I enjoy life and try to spread a little joy when I can.

-Prov. 17:22

-I said that Sin will Steel your joy, but so will selfishness.

-Charles Allen tells of a fisherman friend who told him that you never need a top for your crab bucket. If one crab starts up the side of the bucket, another crab will reach up and pull him down.

-A man dreamed of Heaven and Hell. In both places people were on either side of a long table filled with the best of food. But the people in both places had six feet forks and knives attached to their arms. Folks in Heaven were fat and happy because they reached across the table to feed their brothers, while the folks in Hell were thin and complaining. They refused to feed each other and they could not feed themselves.

Someone scolded Charles Spurgeon for using too much humor in his messages. He replied, “If you knew how hard it is for me to hold

back from saying more, you would appreciate my humor more.”

The language Jesus uses about having His joy fulfilled in us pictures a person pulling into a gas station with their car running on empty, and then filling the tank and then letting some continue to run over.

-When David said, “Lord, restore unto me the joy of Thou salvation,” he was saying, “Fill'er up, Lord!”

III. The Remedy for Joylessness

Why did Jesus have joy? How can we have joy?

1. Jesus had an abiding confidence of the Father's love and care.

Jesus must have been amazed at the anxiousness of people. That's why he said, “Consider the lilies, how they grow. They do not toil or spin. Yet, Solomon is not arrayed like one of them.”

2. Jesus was always looking for what folks could become, seeing their potential.

He looked at Zacchaeus, Simon Peter, the woman caught in adultery AND ME and saw what we could become if yielded to Him.

3. Jesus was committed to His Father.

After the Apostles were beaten and commanded to speak no more in the name of Jesus,

Acts 5:41 says, “They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

You cannot be a joyful believer if you are half-heartedly committed to Jesus!

Jesus Prays That We Will Live Holy Lives

John 17:14-16

The words “keep” or “kept” are used four times in six verses.

-In John 17:11-13 Jesus prays for our security; in John 17:15 Jesus prays that we will live holy lives.

-Notice that in verse 15, Jesus prays that the Father would keep us from “the evil”. I believe the KJV comes closest to expressing the original language The Greek text simply says, “Keep them from the evil.” It could refer to an evil “thing” or it could refer to an evil “person”. That's why some of the translations say “keep them from the evil one (Satan), but I believe He is talking about the evil that is in the world because of the world system, both Satan and the evil of the world system that is controlled by Satan.

Three things I want to share with you:

I. Our Lord's Objection – John 17:15

Jesus says that He is NOT praying that the Father would take believers speedily out of this world by death into heaven.

-He could do that. He could take us on to heaven the moment we are saved and we wouldn't have to put up with the evil world system; we wouldn't have to put up with Satan and his tactics; we wouldn't have to face temptations.

Why did Jesus leave us in this world after we were saved?

-Don't miss this! There are two main reasons that Jesus leaves us in this world after we have been saved:

A. He did not save us just to take us out of this world, but He saved us to take the world out of us!

When God took His people out of Egypt, He could have transported them directly to the Promised Land. Instead, He led them through the wilderness. Why? To test them and to prove them. Deut. 8:2-3, 15

-I want you to notice that it took the Lord a lot longer to get Egypt out of His people than it did to get His people out of Egypt! Num. 11:1a, 4-5

Jesus didn't just save us to take us out of this world and into Heaven, He also saved us to take the world out of us before He takes us to Heaven.

-I John 5:4; Rom. 8:37-39

B. In the second place, Jesus left us in the world because He had work for us to do in the world.

Our Lord left believers in the world to win unbelievers to Him. We are to be salt and light that those who are in the world might believe in Him through our word about Him.

-When He gets ready for His saints to be in Heaven, He has the power to translate us to glory.

II. Our Lord's Objective – John 17:14, 16

Our Lord says it twice: "They are not of this world." What does that mean? It means that although they are in the world, the world is not in them. They are holy in an unholy world. They are separate from the world.

Again, when I say "world", I do not mean the material world on which we are living and moving.

-Nothing which God has created in the heavens above or the earth beneath is in itself harmful to man's soul. To the contrary, the sun, moon, and stars; the mountains, valleys, and plains; the seas, lakes, and rivers; the animal and vegetable creation; all are in themselves "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

-All these are full of lessons of God's wisdom and power and declare daily, "Made by God's Divine Hand!"

The world Jesus denounces is the world system that is controlled by Satan. That "world" is the enemy of the Christian's soul. It is in direct opposition to the things of Christ.

a. Hear what Paul says:

Romans 12:2

- "And do not be conformed to this WORLD, but be transform by the renewing of your minds" (NKJV)
- "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." (NLT)
- "Do not let the world squeeze you into its mold" (Phillips)

Galatians 1:4

- "He died for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live" (NLT)

Eph. 2:1-2

● "Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins. You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God". (NLT)

b. Hear what James says:

James 1:27 "Pure and undefiled religion before God and His Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

James 4:4 "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Jesus prays for two things in this passage: He wants us to be Holy as we live in this world and He wants us to be separate from the world.

1. I Peter 1:13-16

-We are told to ILLUSTRATE Holiness – Be Holy in all your behavior and to IMITATE Holiness - For I Am holy!

God says, "Be like me." Being holy is being like God. Holiness means to be full of God in every part of your life. What could be better than that?

-People need to see God in us!

How do we do that?

1. We need a new mindset – I Peter 1:13a

"Gird up the loins of your mind" means to focus your mind; fix your mind; prepare your mind for action.

-That means that we have to control our mind. Spiritual trouble always begins with a lazy, undisciplined mind.

-First, we think it, then we dwell on it, and then we do it. So, it is with anger, bitterness, lust and every other sin.

2. We need a new Focus – I Peter 1:13b

Be sober or self-controlled. Be free from anything that clouds our moral or spiritual judgment.

-Rom. 14:23b "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If you have a doubt about something, don't get involved in it.

3. We need a new Goal – I Peter 1:13c

Keep your eyes on the prize. Keep your eyes on Jesus. The Christian life is not a 100 – yard dash; It's more like a marathon. Keep on running, and don't stop until you see Jesus standing at the finish line. The race is so hard, so long, so difficult, and at times so discouraging. You'll never finish if you don't keep your eye on the goal. Don't get distracted.

4. We need a new Lifestyle – I Peter 1:14

Don't slip back into your old way of life.

5. We need a new standard – I Peter 1:15-16

If you're a Christian, there ought to be a family resemblance.

-The older I get, the more I look like my dad. Being holy means others see Jesus in me.

2. Be Separate – 2 Cor. 6:17

Remember that God's eyes are upon us and a day of judgment is coming.

III. Our Lord's Observation

Our Lord does not remove us from this world when we are saved because He wants us to represent Him on this earth.

But you and I must constantly be holy and separate from the world or there are some dangers.

1. There's the danger of becoming weary in well-doing

This is especially true if we labor for a long time without any visible signs of success. It can be disheartening. Satan is always quick to take advantage of such circumstances. He'll say, "What's the use, you're getting nowhere. Give it all up." Yet, God is faithful. He will not forget our labor of love.

2. There's the danger of backsliding

Don't allow your heart to get cold toward the Lord. Backsliding begins in the heart. If your heart is not warm toward God, it's because you have wandered away from Him.

3. There's the danger of Satanic attacks

Satan has many arrows in his quiver, many are poisonous darts. Lies might be told. Some may threaten to ruin testimony.

Remember that Jesus IS praying for you. John 17:14-16

One of the best prayers you can pray for yourself is, "Lord, keep me clean and keep me close!"

Jesus Prays for Our Sanctification

John 17:17-19

I want us to remember that what Jesus prays for us in His High Priestly Prayer here in John 17, He is praying for us now as He is seated at the right hand of His Father.

- He prays for our security.
- He prays that we will be joyful.
- He prays that we will live holy lives.

Now, He prays for our Sanctification.

Four things I want us to see about sanctification:

I. The Meaning of Sanctification – John 17:17

The word sanctification has lost most of its popularity in our day. We hardly ever use the word any more.

-Black congregations still use the word. They will say, "I am saved and sanctified."

What does it mean to be sanctified?

To be sanctified means "a separation from common use" or "a separation from the unholy." It carries the idea of some thing or some item or even a person being withdrawn from use by the world.

-You may recall the incident of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, using the gold and silver vessels from the temple for his drunken party. He used that which was holy for an unholy purpose, that of praising other gods. Judgment struck him immediately as he, an unholy man, dared to use that which was holy for a profane purpose.

But there is more positive meaning. To be sanctified means "to be set apart unto the Lord, to be used distinctly for the Lord. It has a

purpose which is to glorify God alone.

The high priest had inscribed on his headdress a gold plate with the words, "Holy to the Lord." It was a constant reminder that this man was to be involved in holy duties, that all his hands touched and all his acts were to bring glory to the Lord. It reminded him of how he was to live, act and think each day, as one set apart to the Lord.

In both the O.T. and the N.T., the word "sanctify" means "to be set apart, to be set apart from sin and to be devoted wholly to God."

- 1.Gen.2:3 – God sanctified the Sabbath Day; that is, He set it apart for His own purpose.
- 2.Ex.13:2 – God sanctified the firstborn of both man and beast, because God said, "it is mine."
- 3.Ex.31:13 – God sanctified the people of Israel as His own possession.
- 4.Lev.21:8 – God sanctified the priest to serve Him in His courts.

Notice John 17:11-12a Jesus has prayed that His people will be "kept" from the world; Separated FROM the world and separated TO His purpose.

There are three phases of our sanctification:

A. Our Sanctification is Positional

We were set aside FROM sin and UNTO God at the moment we were saved.

-Positionally and in the eyes of God we are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. It is an accomplished fact that occurred at salvation and is something we can never lose.

B. Our Sanctification is Progressive

1 Peter 3:15 "Keep on sanctifying Christ as Lord in your hearts." You are sanctified positionally, now act in accordance with your position.

-As the Christian yields to the Lord and attempts to be set apart for Him, the Holy Spirit empowers and helps him to grow in grace and make him more like Christ.

-Sanctification shapes the believer so that He looks and acts like a believer. This work of the Spirit continually reproduces the life of Christ in the child of God.

-2 Peter 3:18; 2 Cor. 7:1 (Keep becoming); 2 Cor. 3:18

C. Our Sanctification will be perfect – 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:2

Notice John 17:19 What does it mean that Christ sanctified Himself? He is infinitely holy, so He couldn't add to His holiness. His character and conduct had no deficiencies, so what is He talking about?

-Notice John 17:1,4 Jesus is saying that He was set apart for the Father's purpose of becoming God in flesh and the hour has come to give His life, for He was separated by the Father of die for the sins of man. His sacrifice will provide forgiveness and salvation for All men.

-Now He is about to be separated for another purpose, his mission on earth is near completion, but He is about to begin a new mission in Heaven for those He has redeemed. He will intercede for them and be their advocate. He now comes to rededicate Himself for His new task.

By the way, there are times we need to rededicate our lives to God's purpose for us. We ought to do it in a public way at times.

II. The Means of Sanctification – John 17:17

Many things can help us in our Christian lives, but the ONE thing that our Lord states as the means or medium of our sanctification is His truth; His word.

-The Word of God needs to be heard, studied, meditated on, embraced, and applied to the Christian's life family.

-We cannot exchange anything else for God's Word – not commentaries, not reading sermons by great men of God. There is no substitute for the Word of God.

-The Word of God will cleanse our ways, direct our paths, encourage our hearts, shape our beliefs, inspire our minds, refresh our spirits. Nothing can take the place of God's word!

III. The Motive for Sanctification – John 17:18

Jesus was sent into the world to seek and to save the lost. Now He is preparing to return to His Father. Now He says, "As the Father has sent me into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, so now I am sending you into the world to seek and to save the lost.

-That's why He gave us the Great Commission: "Go into all the world, or as you are going into all the world...You are to be my

witnesses.

-We are to be His Representative; His Ambassadors; His Spokesman, for the express purpose of reaching and winning the Lost.

IV. The Model for Our Sanctification – John 17:19

Jesus is our perfect model to follow.

-He was in contact with the world without being contaminated by the world.

-He was both “the Friend of sinners” and “separate from sinners.” Like a physician, He came in contact with infection, but He was not contaminated by it.

Jesus Prays for Our Unity

John 17:20-22

We come to the last section of our Lord's High Priestly Prayer.

- In John 17:1-5 Jesus prays for Himself
- In John 17:6-19 Jesus prays for His disciples.
- In John 17:20-26 Jesus prays for the whole church.

The first thing that Jesus prays for His church is that we will be unified. Unity for His people is the great burden of our Lord's heart. He wants us to get along with one another.

-Unity is what God wanted for His people in the O.T. Ps. 133:1-2a

You would expect brothers to get along with one another, but sometimes they don't. In Gen. 45:24, Joseph had revealed himself to his brothers and he sends them to get his father, Jacob, so he can live close to Joseph in Egypt. As his brothers are about to leave, Joseph gives them this exhortation, “And see that you do not quarrel with each other on your journey.” All of us need to heed that advice.

The sad fact is that Christians don't always get along with each other. Even our Lord's disciples argued with one another, and the Lord Jesus was right there with them.

-In the book of Acts, Paul and Barnabas, two giants in the early church, had a falling out over John mark, and some of the N.T. churches broke Paul's heart with their disputes and divisions.

-Spiritual unity is a rare commodity. No wonder our Lord included it in His prayer.

Much of our Lord's prayer had to do with relationships.

- Jesus prayed that we would have Joy; that relationship within our own heart.
- He prayed for our security; our relationship between us and the Father
- He prayed for our Holiness; our relationship with God.
- Now He prays for our unity; our relationship with other Christians in the church.

Someone said that Christians need warmth and fellowship, but too often we are like porcupines on a cold night. They need the warmth of each other, but they dare not get too close to each other or they will get stuck!

What kind of unity was Jesus praying for when He prayed that we would all be one?

1.He is NOT praying for Ecumenicalism; that is, bringing all churches, with their different beliefs, and uniting them in ONE ecclesiastical body of organization. Of course, that would mean compromising some fundamental convictions and beliefs. “No amount of rotten eggs can make a good omelet.”

2.He is NOT praying for Uniformity. The Lord never wanted us to be a cookie – cutter religion where we all dress alike and look alike and talk alike. You can tie the back legs of two cats together and throw them over a clothesline together, but that doesn't mean that they will be one in spirit.

We can understand the unity Jesus is talking about by looking at the various images He gives of the church throughout the N.T.

1.The church is described as The Family of God.

Salvation is described as being born into God's spiritual family. We are His spiritual children, He is our Father, we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

2.The church is described as a Fellowship.

We share many things in common because we have the same Savior and Lord.

3. The church is described as The Body of Christ.

One part of the body simply cannot survive if it is separated from the whole. A family emphasizes Relationships; A Fellowship emphasizes sharing together; A Body emphasizes working together. This Togetherness enables oneness.

Three things I want to share with you about unity:

I. The Pattern of our Unity – John 17:11, 21, 22

In Eph. 4:1-6 Paul declares that God binds His holy people together as one by a sevenfold spiritual cord:

1. One Body: Since Pentecost, both Jew and Gentile are brought into one single fellowship by only one way: Trust in Christ.
2. One Spirit: The same Holy Spirit gives life to us all and indwells us all.
3. One Hope of our Calling: All Christians share the same hope of eternal life and heaven and being transformed into Christ's sinless likeness when He comes again.
4. One Lord: Jesus is Lord over all believers because we all belong to Him.
5. One Faith: Not believing faith, but the body of truth or doctrine revealed in the N.T.
6. One Baptism: Water baptism is an outward sign of our inward faith and publicly identifies us with Christ.
7. One God and Father of us all: As God's children through faith in His Son, we look to one Father who is above all and works through us all and is living in us all.

II. The Purpose of our Unity – John 17:21

When we work on unity, we work on evangelism, because unity attracts folks to Christ.

- John 13:35
- It was said of that infant church, "Behold, how they love one another."

- The world saw that there was something different about these Christians.

One of the greatest witnesses to the world is when we get along with one another in unity. We need unity for the sake of the ministry.

There is something very troubling when we start backbiting and criticizing one another.

To dwell above with saints we love, That will be grace and glory.

To live below with saints we know, well, that's another story!

III. The Power of our Unity

How is unity gained? Eph. 4:1-3

1. With ALL Lowliness

It is the word "humility" and humility is essential to unity. Aside from love, humility most distinguishes us from the world. Humility is one of the hardest traits to learn and manifest daily because of our old sinful nature. Yet, Jesus described Himself as being "meek and lowly of heart." He did NOT come to be served, but to serve and to give Himself as a ransom for all.

-Watch Jesus as He quietly and gently washes His disciples' feet. Humility is an attitude of the heart that recognizes God's love for and value of others and is willing to put the needs of other's first.

2. With ALL Meekness or Gentleness

Humility and gentleness go hand and hand. Where humility is an attitude, meekness is an action derived from it.

-Gentle people are not harsh or rude with others; nor do they strive to get their own way. Instead, they are considerate and kind and do not complain.

3. With Long suffering or Long temperedness

It is patience toward aggravating people. Patience gives people time. It creates an atmosphere of grace that allows us to fail and grow and make mistakes and learn.

4. Forbearing one another in love

This is the action side of patience, which reaches out in forgiveness, understanding, and loving tolerance. We treat those who have hurt us with grace by remembering how gracious God acted toward us when we failed and hurt Him.

-Those are not easy things to do, but for the sake of unity, they ought to be a part of our lives.

It's crazy not to get along with each other.

A man was visiting an insane asylum one day, and he noticed that all the insane people were on the field outside, but there was only one guard. He asked the guard, "Aren't you afraid?" The guard said, "Absolutely not."

He said, "Don't you believe that since you are the only one here, these people could unite and over-run you and break out of the asylum?" He said, "That's impossible." The man asked, "Why is that impossible?" The guard replied, "Because lunatics don't unite."

If I'm a person who doesn't want to get along with others and put our differences behind us, what does that make me?

Have you allowed a silly argument to come between you and another Christian?

-John 13:34-35

Jesus Prays for the Home-Going of the Saints

John 17:24-26

Heaven will be the ultimate experience for the Child of God.

- Salvation is a life-changing experience. There is nothing like it. When we trust Christ; receive Him into our hearts; have our sins forgiven; are placed in the Body of Christ, His Church; it is a miracle of His grace. I've heard folks say about salvation, "It was so good to get saved, I'd like to do it over and over again." I know what folks mean by that, but we can only be saved one time.

- Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a wonderful experience. If you have been filled with the Spirit, you know what it is, but it's hard to explain to those who have never been filled with His Spirit.

- Going through trials are needful for God's children to grow and mature. Trials are not fun to go through, but in the midst of trials we are assured of His presence with us and, usually in hindsight, we see the trials were good for us and matured us.

- Everything the Saint experiences is designed to make us more like the Lord Jesus, but the ultimate experience for the child of God will be Heaven.

The Bible describes our Home – Going as "the blessed hope." Then the Bible describes the lost man as having no hope. I Thess. 4:13-18.

To the lost man, hope is little more than "wishful thinking" or the "power of positive thinking." It is more of a wish that may have no ground or basis for being realized.

-I can say, "I hope that it doesn't rain this week," but I have no promise nor assurance nor confidence that my hope will be fulfilled. It is merely a wish based on my personal desire.

The Bible speaks of hope being focused in the Lord. As the Lord is faithful and sure, even so our hope in Him is a sure confidence.

- Ps. 38:15 "For in Thee, O Lord, do I hope."
- Ps. 146:5 "How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God."
- Jer. 17:17 "Thou art my hope in the day of evil."
- Col. 1:27 "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
- Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7; Heb. 6:19

Our hope; our confidence; our assurance is in Christ and in His Promises. Jesus has promised that those who are his will be with Him in Heaven. John 14:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:8

As Jesus closes out His High Priestly prayer, He talks about:

I. The Certainty of Heaven – John 17:24

Our Lord's desire for us is that we will be with Him in Heaven. That's exciting! Saints have always talked and sung about going to heaven to be with Jesus.

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more
And the morning breaks eternal bright and fair
When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore

And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there!

On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise
And the glory of His resurrection share
When His chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there!

Let us labor for the Master from the dawn til setting sun,
Let us talk of all His wondrous love and care;
Then when all of life is over and our work on earth is done
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there!

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, Sing His mercy and his grace;
In the mansions bright and blessed He'll prepare for us a place.

Let us then be true and faithful, Trusting, serving every day;
Just one glimpse of Him in glory will the toils of life repay.

Onward to the prize before us! Soon His beauty we'll behold
Soon the pearly gates will open, we shall tread the streets of gold.

When we all get to heaven, What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus, we'll sing and shout the Victory.

Heaven is no pie in the sky. Heaven is real and we will be with Him!

II. The Change in Heaven

Think about this: When Jesus ascended back to Heaven after His resurrection, things were different in Heaven. For the first time, Jesus was in Heaven in the form of a man.

Jesus told the woman at the well that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth."

-Now listen to Hebrews 10:4-5, 10-12 (But this MAN); John 1:14

-John saw the glorified God – man in Heaven – Rev. 1:12-18; Rev. 4:1-6, 9-11

III. The Celebration in Heaven – John 17:24

"That they may BEHOLD my glory, which thou hast given me"

Moses was allowed to see the "hinder parts" of God's glory. Steven, as he was dying for his faith, when the rocks were pounding his body, caught a "glimpse" of His glory. But we shall BEHOLD His glory!

Dottie Rambo used I Thess. 4:16-17 to write "We shall behold Him".

The sky shall unfold, preparing His entrance;
The stars shall applaud Him with thunders of praise.
The sweet light in His eyes shall enhance those a waiting,
And we shall behold Him then face to face.

Chorus

And we shall behold Him, we shall
behold Him
Face to face in all of His glory;
And we shall behold him, Yes, we shall
behold Him
Face to face, our Saviour and Lord.

The angels shall sound the shout of His
coming,
The sleeping shall rise from their slumbering
place.
And those who remain shall be changed in a

moment.

And we shall behold Him then face to face.

A group wrote a song and tried to imagine what they would do when they first beheld the Lord in glory. They write as though they are speaking to the Lord.

I can only imagine
What it will be like
When I walk
By Your side.

I can only imagine
What my eyes will see
When Your face
Is before me
I can only imagine.

I can only imagine.

(Chorus)

Surrounded by Your glory, what will my heart feel?
Will I dance for You Jesus or in awe of You be still?
Will I stand in your presence or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine

I can only imagine
I can only imagine
When that day comes
When I find myself
Standing in the Son.

I can only imagine
When all I will do
Is forever
Forever worship You.
I can only imagine.

I can only imagine.

IV. The Choice about Heaven

If we go to Heaven it will be because we made our choice about Jesus here on earth.

Here's a person who says, "I'm Not too sure about Jesus. I just don't know if what the Bible says about Jesus is real. After all, there are many religions and they all say they are the real religion. I think I'll just wait until I die and then if I meet Jesus, I'll trust Him then."

That's not the way it works. If you don't make your choice FOR Jesus before you die, it will be too late.

-You must trust what Jesus said about Himself – John 14:6

Drinking the Cup: Betrayal John 18:1-11

Our Lord Jesus was a man of great courage. We never find Him shrinking from the task of redemption that was set before Him. On the contrary, we find Him standing tall and carrying out the redemptive plan of His heavenly Father without flinching or failing. He never tried to evade it or avoid it. He faced it head-on.

-Our Lord boldly faced the "hour" for which he had come to earth. There was a firm determination of His will and His Heart and His mind

to drink the cup that the Father would hand to Him on behalf of sinners.

-Throughout John's Gospel we find references to our Lord stating, "My hour has not yet come." But when we come to John 12:23, He declares, "The hour HAS come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

-Notice John 12:27-28a; John 13:1a; John 17:11,21,22-When it came to our Lord's desire to drink the cup, we could use words like anticipation, eagerness, resolve, fixed purpose. He was master of the moment.

Notice:

I. The Place of Betrayal – John 18:1-2

We see both our Lord's lordship and His control in His choice of the place where He would encounter His captors. The Lord deliberately chose Gethsemane.

-John's specific mention of it as a garden in John 18:1 suggest that John has in mind a deliberate comparison with the original Garden of Eden. The symbolism is this:

- The first Adam began life in a garden. Christ, the last Adam, came at the end of His life to a garden.
- In Eden, Adam fell. In Gethsemane, Jesus conquered.
- In Eden, Adam hid himself. In Gethsemane, our Lord boldly presented Himself.

This symbolism is not accidental. It was an assurance that Christ was in control.

To enhance this symbolism, John mentions in John 18:1 that "Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley.

-The Kidron Valley was less than a quarter of a mile from the Upper Room. It was literally a drain that ran from the temple alter down to the Kidron ravine to drain away the blood of the sacrifices. At Passover time as many as 250,000 lambs were slain. So, when Jesus and His disciples crossed the Kidron, it was red with the blood of sacrifice.

There is a gap between verses 1 and 2 that is filled in by the accounts of the other gospels. From there we understand that unspeakable horror overcame Christ in Gethsemane as He wrestled with the reality of what was to come.

- Matt. 26:37-38 "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to the point of death."
- Mark 14:35 Jesus repeatedly (literal translation) fell to the ground "and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him."
- Luke 22:44 "And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."
- Most of us have never broken a sweat while praying, much less sweat drops like blood.

It was not the PAIN that caused Jesus horror, nor was it the SHAME, but it was the fact that he was going to pay the penalty for our sin, which included His Father turning His back upon Jesus and forsaking Him.

To drink the cup means to go through a difficult experience. We use a phrase sometimes when someone is facing a consequence for doing wrong and we say, "He's going to have to take his medicine."

It is interesting to note that some trophies are designed like cups to symbolize the trials and suffering that have been swallowed and now the victor enjoys the thrill of victory.

II. The Perpetrator of the Betrayal – John 18:3

Judas is going to point Jesus out by placing a kiss on His cheek.

-We are told that a "band of men" or a "detachment of troops" were with Judas. It is the word "cohort." The soldiers of the cohort were 600 fully armed men, each carrying a short sword to ensure against mob violence or rebellion. They wanted to arrest Jesus away from the people, so there would be no riot, but they were prepared for the worst.

-There were also officers from the chief priest. These were the temple police who were there with clubs. They were the primary arresting officers since Jesus' destination after the arrest was to be brought before the High-priest. They came ready for resistance from Jesus and His followers.

-What a sight that must have been. Six hundred men with lanterns, torches and weapons at midnight, heading toward Jesus!

III. The Protection at the Betrayal – John 18:4-9

Notice John 18:4 Jesus was not caught by surprise. He knew when they would come and why they would come. He steps forward to meet them and to openly identify Himself.

Jesus asked them, "Who are you looking for?" They said, Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I AM!" "They drew back and fell to the ground."

Jesus responded with His divine name, "I AM". Why would anyone, particularly a large group of soldiers, fall to the ground in the face of one, unarmed man, unless there was something unusual about what he said and who He is?

-I agree with a number of expositors who would say that Jesus was opening the window of divine revelation for just a moment and exposing His glory to this group of sinners.

-It was just a moment that He revealed His glory, just as He did in the Temple when Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and his response was, "Woe is me, for I am undone!"

In a real sense the 600 soldiers didn't arrest Jesus; He arrested them.

-I wonder what was in Judas' mind as he struggled back to his feet.

-Earlier Jesus had said – John 10:17-18

He asked them a second time, "Who is it that you want?"

-There can be little doubt that the soldiers had intended to arrest both the Lord and His disciples; But when Jesus identified Himself, He said, "I am the one you want. Let these men go." He was protecting His disciples.

IV. The Protector at the Betrayal – John 18:10-11

That's real smart, Peter. You are surrounded by 600 men with swords and clubs. Do you think you can take them all on?

To tell you the truth, though, I like Peter's spunk. At least one blow was struck for Jesus. But the truth is that Peter's rash action could have destroyed the church.

I can almost see Malchus standing there, wide-eyed, blood pouring through his fingers, and hundreds of steel blades ringing from their scabbards in one gruesome symphony.

Jesus said, "Peter, put up your sword!" The word means "to throw it down without caring where it falls."

"Shouldn't I drink of the cup my Father has given me? It is His will for me and I delight to do His will."

Earlier Jesus had wrestled with the terror of the cup, saying, "Not my will, but yours be done." Now He sovereignly says, "Shall I not drink it?"

How does this relate to us? Gethsemanes are a part of believer's lives. We all have times of stress when the cup appears to be too much for us.

-Just as Jesus controlled His own destiny, so He controls ours.

His Gethsemane was not a tragedy, and neither are our Gethsemanes. This does not mean there will be no wounds and hurts and hardships, but in the end "we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28).

Malchus: The Last Miracle

John 18:1-11

If you had been a reporter covering the arrest of the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, you might have reported it from several perspectives.

-From Caiaphas' perspective you might have reported our Lord's arrest as a triumph: "At last we have seized Him!"

-From the captain of the band of soldiers the report might have been: "Fourteenth of Nisan, 11:30 pm, arrested one prisoner, Jesus of Nazareth."

-But if you were the apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you might report: "From beginning to end, Jesus - not His Captors – was in complete charge of the situation."

It was Jesus who delayed in the Garden while the arresting party came seeking Him.

It was He who surrendered Himself voluntarily.

It was Jesus who demonstrated power toward the soldiers.

It was Jesus who showed grace toward His disciples and mercy toward His enemies.

In the Garden, 600 soldiers, armed with lanterns and weapons, came for one unarmed man. If he had chosen to resist them, no weapon would have been sufficient. Jesus was arrested because He willingly chose to give Himself up to die to save us.

This incident must have made an impression on the disciples, because it is recorded in all four gospels. Only John tells us it was Peter who swung the sword at Malchus, and that the servant's name was Malchus. Only Luke tells us that Jesus healed his ear. When we think about all that happened that night, the betrayal and the arrest, the disciples never forgot what happened to Malchus. No doubt it

contains important lessons for us.

I. The Cause for the Miracle – John 18:10-11

This is the last miracle performed before going to the cross. In some respects, it is the most beautiful and touching of all the miracles.

Jesus had preached, “Love your enemies. Do good to those who hurt you.” Now He would practice what he preached.

When they laid hold of Jesus, we can understand Peter's desire to fight back, but at this point we remember the words of James: “Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. For human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness” (James 1:19-20).

-Not many of us are good at being slow to anger. Our anger and God's righteousness generally move in opposite directions.

When we find ourselves getting angry, we need to ask ourselves, “What am I afraid of?”

-Most anger stems from fear, and most of our fear comes from the perception that we are not in control or that we are losing control.

-Think about it for a moment. As long as we are in control and in the driver's seat and things are going our way, we rarely get angry. But let things spin out of control and fear takes over. It is only a short step from fear to impulsive anger, and from sudden anger comes all manner of evil.

Peter takes his sword, swings at a man's head, but only cuts his ear and Jesus tells Peter to put up his sword, for all who live by the sword will die by the sword.

-Brute force doesn't advance Christ's kingdom. We can't accomplish God's work by bullying people into submission. There may be some short-term results, but it always backfires in the end, because the use of brute force means we don't really believe God.

Jesus said that He could call twelve legions of angels or 72,000 angels and 72,000 angels could handle 600 soldiers.

-Well, if Jesus had that kind of power at His disposal, why didn't He use it? Because He knew that what was happening must happen to fulfill God's plan.

Jesus didn't need Peter's help. He didn't want to be rescued. Jesus can take care of Himself.

-Listen: Jesus didn't die because He couldn't help it. Pilate's army could not have taken Him if He had not been willing to be taken.

The word Luke uses for “ear” means “a portion of the ear.” The servant could have lived a full life without part of his ear. It would not have impaired his hearing. At worst, the damage would have been cosmetic.

-Jesus would not tolerate so much as the loss of an ear in His defense. The only blood shed would be His own.

-Luke tells us Jesus “touched” his ear. The word means “to hold and press.” Jesus likely reached down, took the piece that had been cut off, held it in its proper place, and pressed against it.

Peter was taking a stand for Jesus, but in the wrong way and in the wrong spirit and it brings hurt to another. Jesus has to heal the hurt.

-How often we, as His disciples, take a stand for Jesus, but in the wrong way and with the wrong spirit and we cause hurt and pain to others and Jesus has to heal the hurt we have caused.

-Our tongues become like swords, saying cutting, ugly things. Sometimes our motives are like swords, destroying and not building. Sometimes our actions become like swords and we react rashly.

II. The Character of the Miracle

There are some interesting facts about this miracle that we don't find in the other miracles.

1. There was no request for the miracle to be done. Our Lord just did it.

But if Jesus had not healed him, the accusers at His trial could have said, “Thanks to one of His disciples, this servant of the high priest is missing part of his ear.” Our Lord gave His enemies no grounds to accuse Him, even indirectly.

2. The miracle was performed on an enemy, an unbeliever, one of the groups who was there to arrest Him.

3. The miracle was done to correct a mistake, a harmful mistake done by one of His disciples.

By healing this man, Jesus clearly demonstrated that He would not retaliate against those who put Him to death. Not only did Jesus show mercy and grace, but forgiveness to those who were doing Him wrong.

III. The Consequences of the Miracle – John 18:11

I can almost see Malchus at the cross; not earless, but whole! Someone asks him, "What do these three fellows on the cross mean to you?" He would say, "I saw that one in the middle last night in Gethsemane. I was one of the soldiers that seized Him. I saw Judas kiss Him. That was our sign to hold Him fast. As I did so, one of His disciples meant to kill me with his sword. I moved just in time; He only got a part of my ear. Then the man on the middle cross picked up my ear, put it back in place, and tenderly healed me. There was something special about that touch. He really healed me. I really believe He is the Son of God; not just because He healed me, but because of the change He made in my heart and life."

He can and will do the same for you!

The Man Without A Fault

John 18:12-14, 19-24, 28-40

This old world has seen some good men; men who came into the world and made it brighter and better by their presence.

-They lived their lives for God and for others. They blessed the lives they touched and when they left this earth, heaven became richer and earth became poorer.

-But every one of these men, regardless of how good or how useful he was had some fault.

-The Bible says, "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." There is some fault in every character, some sin in every life. No man has ever lived a perfect life.

But there is one who is more than mere man. He was the God-man – humanity and deity joined together perfectly.

-In Him there was no fault at all. That man was Jesus; who lived in a world filled with sin and yet who never was defiled by it.

-He was tempted more than any man; yet He never gave in to temptation.

-Jesus' life was an open book. He asked, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" "Which one of you can point to one sin in my life?"

-Jesus was the only man without a fault.

I. The Treatment

-Six hundred armed soldiers came to the Garden to arrest the unarmed Jesus; yet, it was Jesus who was in full control of everything that went on.

-John is the gospel that shows and proves our Lord is God. Matt., Mark, and Luke show us the human aspects of Jesus; John the divine aspects.

-John tells us Jesus went to the Garden with His disciples; yet, only Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us WHAT He prayed.

Let me tell you how Jesus was in charge of all that went on:

- He knew that Judas would go to the Garden first to look for Him. Jesus went there so they could take Him with ease.
- Jesus asked them who they came to arrest. Twice He made them say "Jesus of Nazareth" and He said, "Then let these other men go free."
- When He announced that he was Jesus, all the soldiers fell backwards to the ground and didn't get up until He spoke to them again.
- When Peter cut off Malchus' ear, Jesus told him to put up his sword, for he was going voluntarily with them. Then He said, "I could call 12 legions of angels – 72,000. In the O.T. one angel destroyed 180,000 men in one night. All of heaven was poised to act at His command.

-John 18:19 They asked Jesus about two things: His disciples and His doctrine

(a) His Disciples

• How many do you have? Who are they? Jesus ignored this question. He never answered them. He knew that if He gave them their names they might also be brought to trial and be subjected to the same treatment He knew would receive.

- Wasn't that just like our Savior? He defended the ones He loved. In like manner, He will defend you and me.
- Martin Luther went to sleep one night troubled about his sins. He wondered if he were saved, then he had a dream. He saw the recording angel standing at a big blackboard. Martin Luther's name was on the blackboard and the angel was making a list of Luther's sins. They were so many and so great that he felt he would never be forgiven. But while he stood in despair, he saw a pierced hand come into view. This hand wrote these words above the list of Luther's sins, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanse thee from all sin." And as he gazed in wonder, the blood trickled from the wounded hand and washed the record clean. Luther awakened, rejoicing, knowing that his sins had been forgiven.

(b.) His Doctrine John 18:19-23

- This is the first recorded blow that the holy Son of God receives at the hands of sinners.
- Think of it! Jesus, the all-powerful, high and holy Son of God, and this low worm of the dust has the audacity to slap Him!
- If this had happened to us, our anger would have flared up and we would have struck back. Jesus only spoke. – John 18:23

II. The Trial

-Jesus was subjected to six trials that night; Three religious, three civil, and every one of them were illegal.
-The charges against Jesus? The Jewish, religious trial is for blasphemy; the Roman, civil trial was treason.

Let me show you why the trials were illegal:

- (1) Arrest for a capital crime must be made in broad daylight, not at night according to their own law. They ignored the law.
- (2) Arrest for a capital crime may not be made based on information by the offender's follower – for if the accused were a criminal, so were his followers. The law was ignored. It was Judas who accused Him.
- (3) No Jewish trial may be held at night; that is, between 6pm and 6am. Two of the three Jewish trials were held between 2 and 6am.
- (4) A trial is never to be held before only one person so that partiality or prejudice can be avoided.
- (5) Members of the Jewish court, after hearing testimony regarding the one accused of a capital crime, are not permitted to render an immediate verdict, but are required instead to return to their homes for two days and nights, eating only light food, drinking only light wine, and sleep well. Then they are to return and hear again the testimony against the accused and cast their vote.
- (6) The Sanhedrin must vote one at a time, the younger first, so as not to be influenced by the older men on the council. In the third trial, they all voted simultaneously.
- (7) The accused has the right of defense. No defense was given.
- (8) Most important of all, there was no proven charge against the prisoner. In fact, the judge said three times that he found no fault in Jesus – John 18:38; John 19:4,6

He was convicted in the end only because He voluntarily answered a question put to Him by the high priest in which He claimed to be the divine Son of God and the Messiah.

-Pilate said Jesus was innocent! Why didn't he release Him?

-Up to this point, Pilate has done nothing wrong. He has questioned Him, examined Him, he reached the right verdict.

-Why didn't he release Him?

- He saw the mood of the people – And he was a coward.
- He wanted to please the people – And he was a crooked Politician.
- To let Jesus go would have hurt him politically and financially and he wasn't willing to pay the price. If you let Him go, you are not Caesar's friend.
- His decision was shaped by the crowd.

Too many make their decision about Christ because of the crowd; what others will say. They know He is God's Son; that He will save them, but the crowd doesn't want them to make that decision for Him; so, they don't.

God provided seven witnesses to the innocence of Jesus Christ. Seven is the number of completion in the Bible, so God provided a complete witness to our Lord's innocence.

1. Judas referred to Christ as the innocent blood – Matt. 27:3-4
2. Pilate's wife refers to the Lord as "that just Man" - Matt. 27:19
3. Herod said that the Lord had done nothing worthy of death – Luke 23:15
4. The thief on the cross said He did nothing amiss – Luke 23:41
5. The centurion called the Lord a righteous man – Luke 23:47
6. Peter stated that Jesus did no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth - I Peter 2:22
7. Three times Pilate said he found no fault in Jesus – John 18:38; John 19:4,6

Add to that, that John calls Him the Righteous one; Peter calls him the Holy One of Israel; Matthew calls Him Immanuel: God with us; and Thomas calls Him my Lord and my God.

Then why did Pilate allow Jesus to be put to death?

1. Because Pilate's position, popularity, and prestige were being threatened.
2. Pilate tried to set Him free, but yielded to pressure put on him.
 - a. Pilate said he found no fault in Jesus; yet, had Him scourged and then brought Him out before the people and said, "Behold the Man." Jesus was beaten to a pulp. In showing Jesus to the crowd, bloody, beaten, bruised, flesh ripped, he was seeking sympathy for Jesus, but it only made the crowd more bloodthirsty and they shouted, "Crucify Him!"
 - b. He took a basin of water and tried to wash his hands of the whole matter. But he washed his hands with a washing that only deepened the stain.
 - c. He tried to get the Jews to make the decision for him. The Jews said, "Our Law won't allow us to do that."

d. He tried to bow to public opinion; "What shall I do then with Jesus?" No judge should allow others to make his decisions for him. Indecision is always dangerous.

e. They said, "If you release Him, you are not Caesar's friend". - John 19:12

3. He refused the counsel of his wife who said to "have nothing to do with this just Man."

4. He acted against his better judgment and what he knew was right. He was a coward.

How often those who reject Christ follow the ways of Pilate.

Peter's Denials John 18:12-18, 25-27

All of us as children of God are weak in our own strength and we all have the capacity to fail our God.

-Abraham failed God when he lied about Sarah, his wife, saying that she was his sister. The Messianic line could have been defiled had the grace of God not acted in the situation.

-Moses, in anger, struck the rock that God told him to speak to provide water in the wilderness. The result of his display of anger was that he was unable to enter the Promised Land.

-David, Israel's great king, sinned greatly when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and tried to cover his sin by having her husband killed in battle.

No matter who we are and how much we love the Lord, we all have the capacity to fail our Lord.

Mention the name, "Simon Peter", and it brings to mind the disciple who was the first to stand and to confess, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." He would be the first disciple to go into the empty tomb after our Lord's resurrection. He was the courageous leader of the disciples.

-Mention Peter's name and you picture a victorious disciple who was the preacher at Pentecost and the spokesman for the church.

But in our text for today, we get a different picture of Peter altogether: Here, he is not courageous, but cowardly; not impetuous, but withdrawn; not victorious, but defeated.

Peter is going to deny his Lord, not once, but three times in one night.

-What we see in Peter's life teaches every believer something about himself. Lurking in the shadows of every soul is the capacity for denying Jesus Christ.

-Peter would caution each of us to "Guard your heart." We must give attention to the deceitfulness of our hearts if we would stand for Him each day.

An account of Peter's failure is repeated in all four Gospels to remind us that, if Peter could fail his Lord, so can each of us.

Three things I want to share with you from this text:

I. The Reality of Failure

Dwight L. Moody was once asked by a man who was in personal, financial, and domestic trouble, "Mr. Moody, what would you do if you were in my place?" Moody responded, "I wouldn't have gotten in your place in the first place."

-With all due respect to Mr. Moody, I believe he is wrong. His statement sounds too much like Simon Peter's bold declaration, "Lord, though all others may forsake you, I never will." How we need to learn the truth of the old phrase, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." We need to sense deep in the inner recesses of our soul the truth that failure is a possibility for all of us.

Peter THOUGHT he was ready to face anything for Jesus Christ.

-With determination and plenty of grit, he followed behind Jesus Christ after His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. He had impulsively drawn his sword and lopped off the ear of the high priest's servant. None of the other disciples had acted that courageously! Peter stood alone!

-No doubt Peter felt good about his courageous act in the garden, so now he would follow Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest's home. He was so sure he would display his courage again.

Don't miss this: Jesus had warned Peter of his weakness, but Peter had an inflated opinion of himself. I want you to note this because what got Peter in trouble and caused his failure is the same thing that often gets us in trouble and causes our failure.

-John 13:33, 36-38; Matt. 26:31a Peter listened to the warning of Jesus, but he didn't think our Lord's words applied to him. They may

apply to the other disciples, but Peter would never do such a thing. He was too tough, too determined and too loyal to falter in the time of difficulty. He loved Jesus too much to fail Him! (Matt. 26:41) But Peter slept and trusted in his own ability to handle the difficulties ahead.

-The Bible warns us about ourselves: 1 Cor. 10:12; 1 Tim. 4:16a ("Pay close attention to yourselves."); Heb. 3:12; Rom. 12:3

It is sometime after midnight when Peter comes to the gate of the courtyard and waits to be admitted.

-John 18:15-17 tells us that John was known to the high priest, but Peter was not. John goes back to the servant girl who kept the door and persuades the girl to let Peter in.

-Peter enters the courtyard. He is now in enemy territory, but he thinks he is perfectly safe. There are fifty people in the courtyard, maybe more; it is after midnight, and no one there knows him – he thinks!

Strange! Peter had delighted in being one of Christ's disciples; now, he wanted to be unnoticed. He did not want anyone to know he was a disciple of Jesus.

-Notice John 18:17 The word "also" has reference to John who was already present and known by the high-priest's family. The servant girl knew John was a follower of Jesus and it didn't matter to her, but Peter chose to be unnoticed as His follower. He said, "I am not."

The same danger of wanting to be an unnoticed Christian comes in our lives. How often have we been with some new friends, perhaps at school or on the job or while playing some sport, when the matter of Jesus or Christianity comes up and we say nothing, hoping that no one will recognize us as being a Christian? We fail to declare that we belong to Jesus.

Peter told the Lord that he would die for Him, but that he would never leave Him. Our Lord seldom asks us to die for Him, but He does ask us to live for Him; to stay committed to Him; to stay in close fellowship with Him; to take our stand for Him.

-Why didn't Peter witness to the girl? The devil was able to use that little girl when someone is following the Lord afar off, like Matthew described Peter, for they are easy to catch off guard.

The Gospel of Mark points out something the other Gospel writers do not. Remember that Mark got much of his information from Peter.

-Mark 14:30 tells us that before the rooster crows TWICE that Peter will deny the Lord three times.

Mark 14:68 tells us that when the servant girl let Peter in, she said, "You were also with Jesus." When Peter denied it, he went out on the porch and the rooster crowed" after the first denial. Roosters often crow before the sun comes up as a kind of rehearsal for the louder crowing after the sun comes up. For Peter, this first crowing was a warning.

John 18:18 tells us that Peter then stood and warmed himself around the fire with the enemies of Jesus. Now he is in the place of real temptation.

-Before, Peter didn't distinguish himself as a Christian; now he's trying to blend in with them, to act like them, to adopt their way of thinking.

-When we are in a worldly setting and desire to change colors like a chameleon so that we don't stand out or appear different, we are guilty of the same unguarded heart that Peter exemplified in the denial.

-We should never try to hide our Christianity when among this crooked and perverse generation. The world needs to see Christians boldly being salt and light.

John 18 reveals something else to us. As Jesus was answering the high priest, one came and struck the face of Jesus.

-Peter simply stood there. That one, who only a few minutes before had cut a man's ear off, just stood there and would not stand and be counted for his Lord.

-How could he watch the face of Jesus being slapped and do nothing? How can those of us who claim to love Jesus stand with the devil's crowd and listen to them use the Lord's precious name in vain and not take our stand for Him?

-No doubt, while Peter warmed his hands at the enemy's fire, he felt cold and uncomfortable in his very soul. The comfortable place is seldom the committed place.

Now comes the third denial. What should Peter have done when he denied the Lord the first time? He should have stopped, recognized that he had sinned against the Lord, confessed it, repented of it, sought out the girl and righted the wrong. Instead, his first sin went unchecked. Then the second sin went unchecked.

-Sin is relentless. It is never satisfied until it wraps itself around us and crushes us. Sin wants all of us.

-Now a relative of the man Peter had struck with the sword said, "I saw you in the Garden with Jesus." Peter cursed and denied it for the third time, and rooster crowed again.

Once Peter cursed, they never asked him again about being a follower of Jesus.

The crowing of the rooster that morning went unnoticed to the majority of the people in Jerusalem. It was a common sound to most. There was nothing out of the ordinary about it. It brought to them no significant message, other than the birth of a new day. But for Peter, the crowing of that rooster was like a blare of a bugle. The rooster was the messenger of God to Peter's heart and it's familiar

sound brought to him a message of his failure and sin. -I think every time from that day forward, when he heard a rooster crow, he was reminded that he denied his Lord.

II. The Reasons for Failure

What possessed Peter to deny knowing Jesus?

-Peter was scared, tired, and the case of Jesus appeared to be hopeless. That doesn't excuse his conduct, but it does make it understandable.

Then, Peter never expected to be questioned by a servant girl. Her question caught him totally off-guard, and he blurted out an answer almost without thinking. Once he had denied Jesus, he thought there was no turning back. He had to play the situation out.

What happened to Peter was no fluke. He set himself up by a long string of bad choices that night. We often follow the same shameful pattern.

1. We ignored the warnings of Jesus.

How often has our Lord given us preventive measures to keep us from sinning and we do not heed His counsel. We still go to the places we should not go. We watch and hear things that we know are harmful to us and know will lead us to sin. We fail to read God's word and commune with Him in prayer; then we act surprised when we fall into sin!

2. We don't admit our own weakness.

We see others being trapped in sin, but somehow, we think we are stronger than others or have more will power than others or we are more disciplined than others, so if we get in sinful situations, we are strong enough to withstand temptation. No, we're not!!

3. We follow Christ, but at a distance; far off.

4. We try to blend in with the world.

5. We are unprepared when the attack comes.

It's interesting that Peter only fooled himself. The others never really believed him. They sensed he was lying. Something in his face and tone of voice gave him away.

-Look again at I Cor. 10:12

III. The Recovery from Failure

The greatest tragedy is not that we fail our Lord; the greatest tragedy is that we fail our Lord and then fail to seek His mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

-Our Lord is not surprised that we would fall into sin. In fact, He makes a way for us to be reconciled and forgiven. I John 1:9.

When Peter denied his Lord the third time and the Lord turned and looked at Peter, it was:

1. A Convicting Look

"Peter, you said that you didn't know me. Look at me, Peter. Look at me. Do you not know me?"

-There is a little rooster inside all of God's children. When we do wrong it convicts us and causes great guilt.

2. A Compassionate Look

It was not a look of condemnation, but of love, mercy, and grace.

3. A Commissioning Look

Weep, Peter. Repent, Peter. When you are reconciled to Me, go and strengthen your brothers.

-He replaced failure with faith, defeat with dedication, sorrow with service, profanity with preaching. He moved past failure to victory.

Brownwell North was a capable evangelist – used of God in several evangelist circles to preach the gospel. But he left his interest in spiritual things and went into a life of shameful activity for a couple of months. Some of it was done in secret but some of it made the headlines and he felt he was ruined for life. When he finally decided what a fool he had been, he came back like the prodigal from the pit. The Lord received him back and blessed him. After

a period of time he felt pressed back into the ministry. Brownwell feared the possibility of his straying being found out. Finally, when he thought it was hidden away in the sands of time, he was back in the pulpit. One night in a revival service he was given a letter unsigned. Just before the service began, he took the letter and read it. The letter described a series of shameful events he had engaged in and his stomach turned and the letter concluded: "If you have the guile to preach tonight, I will stand and expose you." North took the letter and went to his knees. A few minutes later he was in the pulpit. He began his message by reading the letter from start to finish. And he said, "I want to make it clear that this letter is perfectly true. I am ashamed of what I have read and what I have done. I come tonight, not as one who is perfect, but as one who is forgiven." God used that letter and the balance of his ministry to help bring "spiritual failures" back to fellowship with Christ.

Just so, God used Peter: He denied his Lord, but God used him at Pentecost.

Something Beautiful...Something Good

All my confusion (shame, rebellion), He understood

All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife

But He made something beautiful of my life.

Not perfect, but forgiven: You can know the joy of that truth.

This message is: You can be forgiven...blessed...used of God!

Pilate Before Jesus

John 18:28-19:16

Before Reading the Passage:

We come to the trials of Jesus. There are six of them – three are religious; three are civil.

-At first reading it looks like it is Jesus before Pilate, but if you study the passage carefully, you come to see that it is really Pilate before Jesus.

-Jesus is in full control; He's calling the shots.

-Listen and watch as Jesus puts Pilate on trial!

Read the passage

Pilate was the most powerful man in Jerusalem in that day; and yet, he was the weakest.

-He knew what he should do and could do, but didn't have the courage to do it.

-The decision to release or to crucify Jesus rested squarely on his shoulders.

I. The Description of Pilate

-Pilate was the Roman governor over Jerusalem from A.D. 26-36.

-He was ill-prepared for his job. He was not trained or experienced as a governor or judge. He was appointed to the position because of some deed he had done.

-He was a soldier/warrior. The name "Pontius" means "belonging to the sea."

-In other words, he had been a fighting soldier and was taken from the fight and put in an administrative position.

-Now as a politician, he was crooked, cruel, careful and calculating.

-Tradition says that after the resurrection of Jesus he went mad and was recalled by Tiberius and banished to Vienna and committed suicide there in 41 A.D.

II. The Dilemma of Pilate

He is going to try Jesus...And it becomes a real struggle for him.

A. Pilate Faces Jesus Jn. 18:28-30

-Three charges are brought against Jesus – Luke 23:1-2

(1) He Examines Jesus

-Pilate did a good job of examining Jesus. He asked Jesus seven questions:

(a) "Are you the King of the Jews?" John 18:33

(b) "Am I a Jew?" (I'm not a Jew, am I?) John 18:35

(c) "What have you done?" John 18:35

(d) "Are you a King?" John 18:35

- (e) "What is truth?" John 18:38
- (f) "Where do you come from?" John 19:9
- (g) "Do you refuse to speak to me?" John 19:10

-Pilate had a responsibility. If He was guilty, he must punish Him. If He was not guilty, he must release Him.

(2) He Evades Jesus

-He tries to shift his responsibility to others.

- (a) He tries to send Jesus to Herod when he hears that Jesus is a Galilean, but Herod sends Him back – Luke 23:7
- (b) He tries to hand Jesus off to the Jewish leaders. John 18:31
- (c) He tries to offer them Barabbas for Jesus John 18:39-40
- (d) He scourged Jesus, thinking after the crowd saw Him beaten, covered with blood, that would satisfy them – John 19:1-8 (He thought he would chastise Him and let Him go – Luke 23:22)
- When Pilate gave Jesus to be scourged, he knew it was an injustice to let an innocent man be punished, but he thought it would save Him from a worse injustice - crucifixion
- Pilate's conscience rebelled but he calmed it by telling himself it was the lesser of two evils.
- (e) He tries to remain neutral about Jesus by calling for water to wash his hands of Jesus – Matt. 27:24
- This is a great blunder tried by many – just be neutral about Jesus. But you cannot be neutral about Jesus. To decide not to decide is to decide against Him.

(3) He Exonerates Jesus

-Three times Pilate says, "I find no fault in Him." John 18:38; John 19:4,6

B. Pilate Fears Jesus

- Jesus is a hot-potato in Pilate's hand. He can't get rid of Him.
- Pilate's wife was disturbed by a dream and sent a letter to Pilate saying, "Have nothing to do with that just man."
- Then the Jews told Pilate that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Pilate thought He might be – John 19:6-8

III. The Decision of Pilate

- Pilate was at his fork in the road. He had to make a decision. What would he do?
- He wants to let Jesus go...Then the Jews deliver the knockout blow; the final and fatal shot. John 19:12-13, 16
- There had been hope up to that point. Pilate had been fighting for his own life and the life of Jesus, but when that word was spoken, Pilate tossed Jesus to the Jewish hungry pack of wolves.
- Pilate's name became stained with blood. Worse still, the blood of the precious, innocent Son of God.
- I believe he wanted to do the right thing and release Him. He came so close to doing what was right. If he had set Him free, he would have made his memory sweet forever.
- But he threw away his chance. He missed the opportunity.
- When it came down to Christ or Caesar, he chose Caesar.

-Three things about his wrong decision:

A. He violated his own conscience

- God put our conscience in us to warn us if we were going the wrong way; making the wrong choice; doing the wrong thing.
- How often we, like Pilate, violate our own conscience and, in spite of God's warning, do what is wrong.

B. He ignored the right thing to do the easy thing

- A survey was taken among High School Seniors. They were asked, "If the final exam determined whether you would pass or fail; whether you would graduate or not, and you knew if you didn't cheat you would fail, would you cheat?" 85% said they would cheat.
- It will not be many years until these seniors will be the leaders in society. What will they do when it comes to the crunch time of their life?
- Will they say, "I'm going to do the easy thing" or "I will do the right thing."

C. He was shaped by the crowd.

- The crowd said to put Jesus to death; so, he did too.
- We live in a world of "everybody's doing it." If you're a parent and have teenagers, you most likely have heard that a time or two.

-Ann Landers was asked by a parent how she would counter that attitude. She said, (1) Everybody's not doing it; (2) Even if they are, that doesn't make it right.

IV. The Discoveries About Pilate

-Pilate is not an example to follow, but there are some truths I want you to see from His life.

A. God loves you still. John 18:33-38 Jesus is trying to reach out to Pilate, to save him. He opens the door to the kingdom and invites him in.

B. It takes courage to do the right thing.

One of the most courageous things I've ever heard of happened at the State Bible Drills. The rules are that you can make two mistakes in finding the passage; on the third mistake you are out. It was getting down to only a few who could win. The caller called out, "The Crucifixion." The young people all stepped forward. They had their finger on the passage. The caller would call on one of them to read. He called on a girl who read the passage in Matt. 27. One young man had his finger on John 18. No one could see where he had his finger. He already had made two mistakes. If he had three mistakes, he could not be judged Excellent. What would he do, knowing that no one would see or know? He raised his hand and said, "I have my finger on the wrong passage." By the rules he was not judged Excellent, but he was by everyone there that day and he was by his Lord.

-It takes courage to do the right thing.

C. When it comes to Jesus, you can't shift responsibility.

-It is your responsibility – what will you do with Jesus!

-Jesus is standing at your heart's door
Standing and knocking, He knocked before
This is the question you face once more
What will you do with Jesus?

What will you do with Jesus?
Neutral you cannot be
One day your heart will be asking
What will He do with me?

-Pilate washed his hands and said, "Take Him and crucify Him. I'm through with him."

-Oh, no, you're not through with Him, Pilate. He stood before you in innocence and you let Him be crucified. One day the tables will be turned. Jesus will be on the throne and you will stand before Him.

-Pilate gave his final verdict concerning Jesus and that verdict stands forever.

-Jesus will render a verdict concerning Pilate one day and concerning us, and His verdict will stand forever.

The Soldiers: Adding Pain and Shame

John 19:1-3, 23-24, 31-37

Down through the years Christian lawyers have examined the six trials...mock trials they were...and have found five major illegal activities that would never have been allowed in a real court of law:

1. The proceedings were begun at night. It was illegal under Roman law to begin proceedings at night because that would be a wrongful rush to judgment.
2. The prisoner was personally abused and mistreated before He was ever brought to trial.
3. They allowed contradictory testimony to be introduced as evidence.
4. No witnesses on behalf of the accused were brought into the court proceedings.
5. The judge before whom He stood pronounced Him innocent and yet handed Him over to be put to death.

Read the passage

We read of the soldiers...the soldiers...the soldiers!

Pilate was responsible for giving the order to crucify Jesus, but it was the soldiers who carried out the order and actually crucified Him.

We do not have the names of any of the soldiers who put Jesus to death. They are just called the soldiers.

Actually, there were at least three groups or bands of soldiers that had a part in the death of Jesus:

1. Temple Guards: These were the temple security guards who found Him in the garden, praying. They laid the ground work for the trial to come.
2. Pilate's Soldiers: The temple guards passed Jesus on to Pilate's soldiers. Four of these soldiers would be the executioners...those who would actually crucify Jesus.
3. Tomb Soldiers: Those who were ordered to stand watch at the tomb.

I. Awful Pain

-I must tell you that before the mid 1900's preachers would describe in bloody detail the sufferings of Jesus. About 1940 or 1950, preachers were told that such description of the death of Christ was too gory and not fit for our modern pulpit. Modern television has desensitized us to cruelty in general. We know what we see on television is not real, so we pay it little attention. The result is that we don't see Jesus' suffering as real so we minimize in our minds the physical suffering of Jesus.

-Then, hardened sinners were told of the awful, bloody sacrifice for sin and their hard hearts would break and they would repent of their sin and turn to Christ.

-Today, we hear little preaching on the blood of Christ and, yet, the Bible still says that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

-No, I don't think we have to go to extremes and be gory just for the sake of being gory...but the suffering and death of Jesus for sin was an ugly, gory sight and we dare not make light of it!

-Watch the soldiers as they inflict the awful pain on Jesus:

A. The Scourging

1. Scourging was unbelievably cruel. To prepare the victim for the scourging, his hands were tied behind his back. Then the victim was taunted. He was slapped with the open hand. The soldiers, as a mob group, would slap him one after another. Then with their fist they would strike the head and eyes until the eyes would almost be swollen shut. He could see only out of small slits in his eyes.

2. The victim was stripped naked, bent over and had his hands tied to a post. He was lashed with straps containing bits of bone and metal. For the Romans there was no maximum number, like thirty-nine lashes in Jewish law (Deut. 25:3). The sadistic executioner lashed away until he felt like stopping.

3. The first blow knocked all the victim's breath away. The bits of bone and metal in the relentless flailing tore out flesh, blood, eyes, teeth and even pieces of internal organs. Many victims died.

4. Jesus was a bloody pulp when Pilate brought Him out and said, "Behold the man"
(John 19:6)

5. Pilate caused the scourging...the crowd enjoyed it...and the soldiers executed it!

6. Oh, but look at our wonderful Lord! Man cannot beat love out of our Lord Jesus. Later, on the cross He prays, "Father, forgive them..."

B. The Crown of Thorns Matt. 27:29

The soldier, unknown to himself, preached a symbolic message with those thorns...for thorns play a strategic part in scripture:

1. The Crown of Sin's Curse Gen. 3:14-19

These are symbols of all the sorrows and suffering of mankind resulting from sin. There were no thorns on earth until sin entered the earth.

2. The Crown of Sacrifice Gen. 22:13

As the ram that was caught in the thicket by his horns (head) was a sacrifice and substitution of Isaac, so the thorns on the head of our Lord speak of our sacrifice.

3. The Crown of Sovereignty Heb. 2:9; Rev. 19:12

Don't forget this was a Crown and Jesus was "crowned with glory and honor" because of His death.

C. The Nails

The hands and feet were tied and then nailed to the cross. The soldiers would feel for the hollow place in the wrist, place a spike there, and drive the spike home.

-There is no way we can look at all the awful pain, but I move now to:

II. The Abusive Shame

A. The Mocking

At the trial, a man shoves Him a stool. "Your throne, O King. Sit"

As the half-conscious Jesus stiffly moves, the man hurls expletives in His face and shouts, "I said sit down!"

When Jesus starts to sit, the stool is pulled out from under Him. The room erupts in laughter. The soldier extends a hand. Weakly Jesus reaches for it. As He does, the soldier balls his other hand into a fist and hits him. Amid the raucous laughter, amid the pool of blood streaming from his nose, Jesus lies motionless. With his face against the flagstone floor, Jesus closes His eyes. For a moment His swelling face finds mercy in the cool of the stone. But only for a moment.

Another soldier nudges Him with his boot and extends a hand. Through eyelids swollen and slit, Jesus looks up. As he takes the hand, the man fakes a punch. Jesus flinches. And another round of laughter fills the circle.

A couple of soldiers hoist the battered prisoner onto the stool. One of them prostrates himself. "A gift from a loyal subject," he says and then rises with an uppercut, tearing the ligaments in Jesus' jaw from their hinges and sending him and the stool reeling backwards.

They drape a deep red cape around his shoulders, which blots the spillage of blood and dyes the cloth a more somber shade. They put him back on the stool and place a tall reed in His hand. "Your scepter, your Majesty."

Another soldier has taken a strand of thorns from the tinder box and woven it into a wreath. "King's gotta have a crown." And he mashes the three-inch thorns into Jesus' scalp. There He is dressed in fool's clothing.

Another man yanks the reed from Jesus' hand and slaps it across his head, driving the thorns deeper. Each puncture leaks a line of blood. Each pulse beat sends trickles of the Savior's life ebbing down his face.

"Hail, King of the Jews!" shouts the commanding officer, and the entire cohort kneels. But instead of tossing the king garlands of praise, the soldiers dredge up phlegm from the raspy depth of their throats and toss that.

The king is pelted with a volley of spit. Then another. And another. Until at last He is drenched with their disdain.

B. The Gamblers John 19:23-24

1. We would say, "All He owned were the clothes on His back." Here, we see, even these were taken from Him by the gamblers of Golgotha. Watch them as they play games at the foot of the cross.

2. There were probably five items – the head band, the sandals, the outer garment, the belt, and the tunic – a seamless robe worn next to the skin. Since the articles were unequal in value, the four soldiers cast some kind of "lots" (sticks, dice, rocks) to see who would get what. Each of them got one article and this left the tunic or inner garment, so they cast the lot again to see who got that, instead of tearing it into four pieces.

3. The essence of the naked Christ is that He gave all He had so we might become all He is to God.

4. The result of sin was the "nakedness" of Adam and Eve that made them ashamed and afraid to come into God's presence. As our naked substitute He made it possible for us to be robed in His righteousness so that we can stand in the presence of a holy God.

When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

III. The Amazing Claim Matt. 27:54

What made this soldier make this amazing claim?

A. The Suffering of Jesus

He had seen people die...He had seen people die on the cross. But never had he seen a man die like this man. This man died pouring out His love.

B. The Statements of Jesus

C. The Scenes after the death of Jesus

The darkness at noonday...the shaking of the rocks...the opening of the graves

D.L. Moody used to tell the story: Peter ended the message on the day of Pentecost by saying, "Whosoever believeth in Him may be saved." A hand in the crowd went up. The man asked, "Can I be saved?" Peter said, "Whosoever..." The man said, "But I was the soldier who used the whip on His back. Will He save even me?" Peter said, "Whosoever..." Another said, "I was the one who made the crown of thorns for His brow. Can I be saved?" Peter said, "Whosoever..." Another said, "I was the one who thrust the spear into His side. Can I be saved?" Peter said, "Whosoever..."

No matter who you are or what you've done, He can save even you! All that is needful is for you to place your faith and trust in Jesus alone.

Substituting for the Substitute

John 19:23-27

We come again to the cross of Jesus – not because it is a pretty place or a pleasant place, but because it is a place of power and purity and a place of inspiration and instruction.

Before we hear Jesus speak for the third time from the cross, there is an incident that takes place with the soldiers at the foot of His cross that I would call your attention to.

-Something happened at the foot of the cross that was prophesied in Psalm 22:18 - "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." All four gospel writers refer to this prophecy in describing Christ's crucifixion (Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24).

-The soldiers who put a person on a cross had the right to take for themselves everything that belonged to the man who was hung on a cross.

There were usually five items that belonged to the victim and four soldiers. There was the head piece (to keep the hair in place), the sandals, the outer robe, the belt and the undergarment, which was usually a soft, loose inner garment which covered the shoulders and came just above the knees.

-Jewish mothers usually made this garment for their sons when they reached the age of maturity and were about to leave home. It would be seamless to show their never-ending love for their son, though he was about to leave home.

-It was this garment that the soldiers were gambling for that day.

-When the soldiers touched His tunic, they touched something near to the heart of Mary.

-Lamentations 1:2 describes how Jesus must have felt as He watched the soldiers at the foot of His cross, gambling for that garment.

-The Poet put it this way:

And sitting down they watched Him there, the soldiers did,
There while they played with dice, He made His sacrifice,
And died upon the cross to rid God's world of sin.

Somehow, He was a gambler too, my Christ
He took His life and threw it for a world redeemed
And 'ere His agony was done, before the westering sun went down
Crowning that day with its crimson crown
He knew that He had won!

Notice the words in John 19:25, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus."

Actually, it should read, "Now there stood near the cross of Jesus."

-If you and I had been in Jerusalem that Passover afternoon when Jesus was crucified, I wonder how near the cross we would have stood.

-It is one thing to sing, "Jesus, keep me near the cross," and it is quite another thing to actually stay near the cross.

-The four Roman soldiers were there, but they were there because of DUTY. The three women with the Apostle John were there because of DEVOTION. They loved Jesus!

-Being near the cross is not a matter of geography, but of a spiritual fellowship with Jesus.

As we come near the cross, we will find ourselves loving the Lord Jesus more, and identifying with Him and serving Him more!

As we come to this passage, I want us to examine:

I. The Scene – John 19:25

It was sometime between 9A.M. and 12 noon as the crowd gathered at Skull Hill. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there at her Son's crucifixion.

-By now she may have been in her early fifties. She is a widow now. Joseph is gone. She stands at the cross with two other women and the Apostle John, and on the cross is her first born son.

-No mother ever had a son like Jesus. Undoubtedly, she pondered that silent and holy night when her Son was born and the promise she heard concerning her Son (Luke 1:32-33). How can that promise ever be fulfilled now?

-Mary remembered the prophecy of Simeon when Jesus was presented as a baby in the temple.

Luke 2:34-35

Two things I want you to see about Mary:

A. Mary stood there ... in silence!

Who can imagine what Mary felt and what she went through as she stood at the foot of the cross looking up at her Son.

-We don't know if Mary had been to a crucifixion before, but as a parent, I can imagine that she suffered to some degree right along with Jesus.

-She had watched as they beat him. She heard the crowd mock Him and accuse Him falsely. She may have stood by the side of the road as Jesus carried His cross. Perhaps she saw Him fall beneath the load of the cross. She felt every blow of the hammer. She flinched under the prick of the thorns on His brow.

-Mary's Son was dying and she could not help! She watched her Son being tortured to death and could not stop it! His wounds were bleeding and she could not take care of them. His mouth was parched, but Mary could not moisten His lips. The nails held Him to the cross, but she could not remove them. How much Mary must have suffered as He suffered.

Try as we may we cannot read the thoughts and emotions of Mary's heart.

-His disciples had deserted Him. Friends had forsaken Him. But Mary stood near Him. Not a word is recorded by any of the gospel writers that she spoke. She suffered in unbroken silence.

-She had the greatest privilege in bearing the Messiah, but she experienced the greatest sorrow as she saw Him crucified.

B. Mary Stood There

We read that others sat while Jesus suffered. Mary stood. The verb used for "stood" means that she stood from the beginning to the end; through the entire ordeal.

-She stands and watches it all. I wonder if she remembered Him saying, "I must be about my Father's business."

Mary is a great testimony. The world always watches to see how a Christian is going to react in such circumstances.

II. The Statement – John 19:26-27

We come to the most touching and the most tender scene at Calvary. This third saying is addressed to the two that Jesus was the closest to on earth – Mary and John.

-Suddenly, in the midst of all His pain, the eyes of Jesus from the cross meet the eyes of Mary as she stands near the cross. And He speaks this third word; and He speaks to her!

The Jews gave great emphasis to the obligation of parents to their children and also to the responsibility of children to their parents.

-The fifth commandment says that we are to honor our father and mother. In His dying moments, He would fulfill the final obligation to be sure that His mother was taken care of after He was gone.

What is the truth here? Jesus thought so strongly about this truth that although He was about the business of saving the world, He was not too busy to care for His parents.

-What an example our Lord has left for us! We are never discharged from that sacred and holy obligation.

-We are to care for our parents while they are alive. I Tim. 5:8

The commandment says that we are to honor our father and mother. The word "honor" means "to respect; do not take them lightly."

-Jesus uses the cross as a pulpit to proclaim a message that all of us need to hear and heed. The welfare of our aging parents is important.

-We are to care for our parents as long as they live, but we are to honor our parents both when they are alive and after they depart this

life.

-There is never a time when it is okay not to honor your parents. That means that we are not to neglect our parents. We are never to be unkind to our parents or talk down to our parents.

-Even if you are unable to speak good about your parents, you can honor them by refusing to speak evil against them.

-Mary was between 50 and 55 at our Lord's death and tradition says that John took Mary into his house and she lived with him eleven years and died.

Now Jesus speaks to John. Our Lord on the cross was the perfect substitute. He said to John, "I am taking your place; now I want you to take my place. John, minister to Mary in my name."

Why John? Why not one of His half-brothers? At this time, they were not believers. John was the most like his Master, in conduct, in character, and in compassion.

III. The Security

Mary was losing a SON, but gaining a SAVIOR.

With the death of her Son comes the birth of her salvation. In a very real sense, she will find that Jesus has made better provisions for her as her Savior than He ever could have as her son.

-Jesus tells John to take Mary to his earthly home while He said of Himself, "I go to prepare a place for you...a mansion in Glory that is yours for eternity.

John was to be the substitute for THE Substitute!

Here is the lesson for us: There is no more glorious mission on earth than to substitute for the Substitute. If the work of Jesus is going to be taken care of, it must be by His substitutes.

-Our job is to substitute for the Substitute.

Annie Johnson Flint wrote:

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today,
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way,
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died,
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

I Am Thirsty

John 19:28-30

The Lord Jesus has been on the cross now a little more than six hours. Three of those hours was in the hot, bright morning sun from 9AM to 12 noon. Then suddenly at 12 noon, the land in Jerusalem, and maybe over the entire earth, is darkened. It is pitch black! The sun refuses to shine for three hours.

-It was during those three hours of darkness that the spiritual suffering of our Lord took place. Our sin was laid upon Him. The sin of every man was laid upon Him. He became sin for us. The wrath of God was wholly poured upon Him. He literally experienced Hell to pay for our sin on that cross. He paid man's full redemptive price.

Jesus did not speak from the cross during the time of darkness, but He did speak during the daytime.

His first word was a word of Pardon: In grace and mercy He says, "Father, forgive them..."

Then He spoke a word of Peace: To the repentant thief He said, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

Next, He speaks a word of Provision for His mother: "Woman, behold your son;" and to John, "Behold your mother."

Then came the three hour darkness. The moment the light reappeared He said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?"

It is a word of Perplexity.

Shortly after the fourth saying, Jesus speaks His fifth saying. It is the shortest of all the seven sayings, only four letters in the Greek. It is the only direct reference that Jesus made to His own suffering. He said, "I thirst!" After six hours on the cross and taking our hell and God's wrath for our sin, He cried, "I thirst!"

At the beginning of the crucifixion, probably before they drove the first nail in His hands, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all three say that they offered Him “wine mingled with gall” to drink.

“Gall” refers to something bitter. It was a type of Narcotic. The Jews had a custom, based on Prov. 31:6, of administering a pain-deadening medication mixed with wine to victims of crucifixion, in order to deaden the pain.

-Prov. 31:6 This narcotic drink was given to a criminal who was being put to death or to someone agonizing in pain because of a terminal illness. We do much the same today to ease the pain when one is dying.

-Tasting what it was, Christ, though thirsty, “would not drink,” lest it dull His senses before He completed His work. He needed His full mental faculties for the hours yet to come. It was necessary for Him to be awake and alert and fully conscious, for example, to minister to the dying thief.

This is not the first time Jesus had been thirsty since He was hung on the cross. It had been some 18 to 20 hours since Jesus had taken any liquid – probably since He had observed the Passover in the Upper Room and instituted the Lord's Supper.

-Remember that Jesus had gone through Gethsemane, hours of mock trials, the beating under the scourge whip, the open wounds of His hands and feet, six hours on the cross with the loss of blood. No wonder He cries, “I thirst!”

Three things I would point out to you as we come to this fifth saying:

I. There is a Word of Affirmation – John 19:28

Jesus is almost dead. He is barely alive. Every breath now takes a huge effort. He is heaving, gasping, fighting for oxygen. Sweat is pouring off of Him. He is making strange guttural noises. The experienced soldiers had heard that sound before. It was the death rattle. He cries, “I thirst!”

The soldiers had their version of a canteen in which they carried a kind of vinegar wine mixed with water. It was the cheapest drink of that day. It was the drink of the common man and the Roman soldier.

-The soldiers got the wine, took a sponge, dipped it into the sour vinegar wine, put it on a stalk of hyssop, and put it to the lips of Jesus so Jesus could lick the sponge and moisten His lips, tongue, and throat, just enough so Jesus could say one or two more words. Crucified people were only about 20 to 24 inches from the ground so the soldiers could easily reach the lips with the sponge.

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished”

- “After this” - after the darkness and all that transpired in the darkness – Now that the sun began to shine again, Jesus know His work on earth was done.

What was it that Jesus knew?

-His knowledge was more than human knowledge; it was Divine knowledge. There was not a man alive who knew what needed to be done at Calvary. Only God would know that, and Christ was indeed God.

Even on the cross Jesus is in control and the Master of the moment. He is alert up to the moment of His death.

Whatever it was that Jesus accomplished in that bitter agony during the three hours of darkness when He was covered with our guilt and experienced the Father turning His face from Him was now complete.

-His purpose for suffering was finished. Jesus was aware that nothing more was needed. The payment for our sins was accomplished.

II. There is a Word of Identification

This word from the cross, more than any other, identifies Jesus as the God-Man. He is both human and divine.

-As divine He finished the task of paying man's sin debt; as human He cried, “I Thirst.”

-He is exhausted because He has finished His redemptive work and has won the victory for you and me.

Thirst is a sign of Physical weakness. Dehydration saps a body of strength.

-He had given His all for us on the cross. He had nothing left. He used every ounce of energy in the work of Salvation.

-Here was the all-powerful God with no strength left. What a mystery!

-The same Lord who created the Pacific and Atlantic oceans said, “I thirst.” Jesus, who dug the Mississippi River, said, “I thirst.” The same Lord who made water flow from the rock so His people could drink, later had to ask for a drink from His enemies. The one who promised that streams of

Living Water to the woman at the well and promised that streams of living water would flow within everyone who believed in Him, on the cross said, “I thirst.” The source of living water said, “I thirst.”

When Jesus cried, “I thirst”, He fulfilled two O.T. Prophecies: Ps. 22:15; Ps. 69:20-21

III. There is a Word of Revelation

When Jesus said, "I thirst," He meant more than, "My throat is dry and I need a drink of water." He also implied, "I'm enduring the wrath of God for the sins of the human race."

-With those words, Jesus described hell as the place of ultimate thirst.

-Jesus described a rich man in hell. He cried out in agony as he was being tormented in the flames of hell and said, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." (Luke 16:24)

-What thirst! But never quenched. For 2,000 years that rich man has suffered agonizing thirst and he will continue to do so for millions, yea billions of years.

-Those who reject Christ, the Living Water, will suffer eternal thirst.

There is another sense in which Christ still says, "I thirst." We can apply His words to mean, "I am thirsty to save people from their sins and to enjoy a loving relationship with them."

-Notice the Bible's last invitation: Rev. 22:17

"It Is Finished!"

John 19:28-30

On Mount McKinley, a skeleton was found seated on the root of a tree. Just above was a finger carved in the bark, pointing down to the skeleton. Beside the finger were these words: "The end of the trail." They told the tragic story of one who had set out to climb that towering mountain, but his strength had failed. He died with his purpose unrealized.

-Someone wrote that the poor man was saying, "I am through. I have gone my limit. I have accomplished nothing but shame, defeat, and death."

Only one person in history never left behind any unfinished business. His name is Jesus.

-He is the only person who could come to the end of His life and say with absolute and total truthfulness, "I have finished everything I set out to do."

In 1991, President Bush flew to Mt. Rushmore for a special 50th Anniversary celebration. It is a little-known fact that the sculptor, a man named Gutzon Borglum, never finished his work. If you study the faces carefully, it is clear that he spent more time on George Washington than he did the other three presidents. That's because he originally planned to extend the figures of each president down into the chest area. But he never lived long enough to see his dream through to completion. His son continued his work for a few months after his death, but he ran out of money. It's been 50 years and millions of tourists since then, but Mt. Rushmore, as great as it is, remains an unfinished work.

All of us have unfinished things cluttering our lives. We die too soon or we die with our work unfinished.

-We all go through life leaving a trail of unfinished projects and unfulfilled dreams. None of us can say, "I finished exactly what I set out to do in life." Only Jesus can say that.

He has been on the cross for six hours. When He cried, "I Thirst," He was doing so because He wanted to be revived enough to lift Himself up for this loud cry so that all could hear Him say, "It is finished!"

This is a word of:

I. Relief

The Greek word is Teteletai. It means "to bring to an end, to complete, to accomplish, the successful end to a task." It is more than just, "I survived." It means, "I did exactly what I set out to do."

-Our Lord's cry was not a whisper or a soft voice. He cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished!"

But there is more! The verb is in perfect tense.

- Past tense looks back to an event and says, "This happened."
- Perfect tense speaks of an action which has been completed in the past with results continuing into the present.
 - When Jesus cried out, "It is finished," He meant "It was finished in the past, it is still finished in the present, and it will remain finished in the future." The work was done completely, perfectly, but whose results go on and on.

What was finished?

A. His Personal Sufferings Were Finished

There is one more word to be spoken from the cross, but Jesus speaks that word almost immediately after this word.

-No longer would cruel men whip His back, slap His face, spit upon Him, mock Him, drive thorns into His brow or nails into His hands and feet. All His pains have come to an end.

This is no wail of despair; no whimper of a victim. It was a shout of victory! A shout of Triumph! It was uttered in the thrill of an irrepressible joy!

Jesus had completed a task of supreme worth! What was the task Jesus had finished?

- 1.He came to seek and to save the lost.
- 2.He came that men might have life and have it more abundantly.
- 3.He came to build a kingdom, a brotherhood, where those in the kingdom would be of one heart and of one soul.
- 4.He came to make God known to man. All we desire to know about God is found in Jesus Christ.

B. His Perfect Sacrifice Was Finished

Before Jesus Christ died on the cross, it was sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice, year in and year out. The people must have thought, "Will the sacrifices never be finished?"

-Heb.10:11-12 Our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, appeared to make one final sacrifice for sin, putting an end the need for further sacrifices.

-Jesus declared, "It is finished. No more sacrifice! No more cross! No more blood! God is forever satisfied with His perfect sacrifice. Nothing can be added to it. It is complete!

-Religion speaks of salvation in terms of "DO". Christianity speaks of salvation as "DONE!" We can add nothing to what Jesus has already done.

The work of redemption is now complete. The price paid for the sins of the world is Paid in Full.

-Once something is Paid in Full, you never have to pay for it again.

Tetelestai means:

- 1.It is DONE!

Hubert Simpson, in his Testament of Love describes a picture painted for the royal Corps of signalers depicting an incident during WWII. A signaler had been sent out to repair a cable snapped by shell fire and was shot while trying to restore the interrupted contact. The picture shows him lying dead in the fulfillment of his task, holding together the two ends of the broken wire. Beneath the picture is one word, "Through." This is what Christ did for us by His death. Sin snapped contact between God and man. The divine current was interrupted. He established contact in His death. Beneath the cross of Calvary, we write one word- Through! Jesus is the only mediator and no one may come to the Father but by Him.

You see, the saint is living on what Christ accomplished on the cross.

-A pastor was visiting a lady whose husband had been killed in the war. She said to the preacher, "For years, I have been living on the wounds of my husband.

Everything you see in this house was bought with his wounds. The check I get each month for his death has kept me going all these years." The preacher said, "Yes, and I am living on the wounds of my Savior."

- 2.It Cannot Be Undone.

- 3.It Cannot Be Redone.

-What He did on that cross cannot be added to. To try to add anything to His sacrifice to make yourself "more acceptable" is the ultimate insult to His sacrifice. How dare we, in our sinful humanity, think we could "add to" His finished work.

-Some years ago, a Christian farmer was deeply concerned over an unsaved carpenter. The farmer sought to set before the neighbor, the gospel of God's grace and to explain how that finished work of Christ was sufficient for his soul...But the carpenter persisted in the belief that he must do something himself. One day the farmer asked his friend to make a gate for him, and when the gate was ready, he brought it to him in his truck. He arranged for the carpenter to meet him the next morning and see the gate as it hung in the field. At the appointed hour, the carpenter arrived and was surprised to find that farmer standing by with a sharp ax. What are you going to do? I'm going to add a few cuts and strokes to your work. But there is no need. The gate is alright. All that was necessary has been done. The farmer continued to cut. Look what you have done. You have ruined my work. That is what you are trying to do to the work of Jesus.

C. His Power Over Satan

Col. 2:15 Jesus defeated Satan at the cross. He triumphed over Satan and all his demons.

-Heb. 2:14b Jesus did more than weaken Satan. He emptied him of all his strength.

Lifted up was He to die,
'It is finished' was His cry.
Now in Heaven exalted High:
Hallelujah, what a Savior!

II. Readiness

Let me ask you a personal question: What sin is keeping you from God today?

Let me give you some good news. It doesn't matter what your sin is or how guilty you may feel.

-All of your sins have been stamped by God with one word – Tetelestai – Paid in Full.

Anger...Tetelestai...Paid in full.

Gossip...Tetelestai...Paid in full.

Drunkness...Tetelestai...Paid in full.

Just fill in the blank with whatever sins plague your life. Then write over those sins, Paid in Full through the blood of Jesus Christ. The price for your sins has been Paid in Full.

At the Cross! At the Cross!
John 19:16-37

Before Reading the passage:

We as Christians sing: "At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light
and the burden of my heart rolled away -
It was there by faith, I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day."

We sing: "I will glory in the cross."

A cross hung around your neck or pinned to your lapel tells the world of your faith...and wearing it brings a degree of respect.

-But take that tiny piece of jewelry back in time 2,000 years and try wearing it around your neck or on your robe, and people would give you suspicious looks, thinking you were some kind of lunatic.

-For back then, the cross was not a symbol of faith, but of failure; not of morality, but of lawlessness; not of respect but of unspeakable shame.

-It would be like a piece of jewelry designed today in the shape of a hangman noose or an electric chair and hung around our neck.

-Then, the cross was not polished and esteemed. It was made of rough-cut timbers and iron spikes. It was an instrument of torture for criminals deserving capital punishment to be hung upon, usually on Golgotha – the place of the skull which faced away from the city near a garbage dump!

But Jesus' death upon that cross for our sins transformed the cross from an instrument of shame and curse to one of honor.

-We are saved because of the blood of Jesus shed upon that cross.

-Now we sing: "I will glory in the cross!"

-We could not be saved were it not for the suffering of Christ upon that cross.

Christians love to sing of the cross:

"On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
for a world of lost sinners was slain.

O that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
has a wonderful attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above,
to bear it to dark Calvary.

In the old rugged cross, stained with the blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see,
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
To pardon and sanctify me.

To the old rugged cross, I will ever be true,
Its shame and reproach gladly bear.
Then He'll call me someday to my home far away,
where His glory forever I'll share."

So, I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down
I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it someday for a crown."

"For dearer than all that the world can impart was the message that came to my heart
How that Jesus alone for my sin did atone, And Calvary covered it all.

The stripes that He bore and the thorns that he wore, Told His mercy and love evermore
And my heart bowed in shame as I called on His name, And Calvary covers it all.

How blessed the thought, that my soul by Him bought, shall be His in the glory on high
Where with gladness and song I'll be one of the throne, And Calvary covers it all.

Calvary covers it all, my past with its sin and stain; my guilt and despair
Jesus took on Him there, And Calvary covers it all.

"Man of sorrows! What a name, for the Son of God who came, Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah, What a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die, "It is finished!" was his cry. Now in heaven
exalted high; Hallelujah, What a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King, All the ransomed home to bring, Then anew this song will
sing. Hallelujah, What a Savior!"

Read the passage: John 19:16-18

Pilate has examined Jesus and three times he has said to the people, "I find no fault in Him". And, yet, he hands Him over to be crucified!

I. The Way to the Cross

-Jesus has already been on His feet for nine hours during the six trials. During that time, He has been manhandled, spat upon, slapped, flogged, dragged from place to place, with nothing to eat or drink and no rest. His entire body is bruised and bleeding. His eyes are swollen almost shut because he has been hit with fist; His sight comes only through slits in His eyes. His lips have burst open from the blows; his nose is bleeding. He is weakened because of the loss of blood.

-Three men are going to be crucified together. Those who were crucified must carry their own cross-bar up the hill to the place of the skull. Each of the three men had four soldiers who acted as executioners who walked with them up the Via Dolorosa – The way of sorrows and suffering.

-They always took the longest route to Golgotha. It would give the people more time and opportunity to hurl insults and cursings at those who were about to be put to death. It would also weaken them so it would take much of the fight out of them when they were about to be nailed to the cross.

-A 12 by 24 inch placard declaring the crime was either placed around the criminal's neck or carried by one of the four soldiers who walked in front of the man. Before they raised the cross, the placard was nailed to the top of the cross.

-The Via Dolorosa was through narrow streets with cobblestones which would often cause them to stumble under the crossbeam. One of the times Jesus stumbled He could not get up. He was yelled at and kicked and whipped again on His already scourged back. Still He could not get up.

A. Simon of Cyrene Matt. 27:32

-Simon of Cyrene, who lived some 800 miles from Jerusalem, was there to worship, for it was Passover week. He just happened to see and hear what was going on and had just gone to the street to watch.

-When Simon was yanked out of the crowd and told to help Jesus carry the cross-bar, it no doubt angered and humiliated him. He resented having to carry this bloody man's burden. It did him little good to be angry at the soldiers; to resist would mean death, so he turned his anger toward the prisoner.

-I wonder if Jesus talked to him. "I'm sorry to trouble you like this. Thank you for helping me." I wonder if that crossbar, instead of being a burden, became a privilege. He was doing something of supreme worth. Jesus found the cross a bit easier because of him.

-I wonder what it would have been like to be in Simon's shoes:

- To endure the jeers and cursing

- To share our Lord's humiliation of rejection
- To feel the sticky warmth of His blood from the cross.
- To see the executioner who stood waiting impatiently with hammer in hand
- To have the burden of the cross lifted and hear the soldier say, "This is His cross. You are free to go."

-I wonder if Jesus thanked him again for helping Him.

B. The women weeping and wailing Luke 23:28-31

-Luke tells us that some women began to weep and wail for Jesus as He walked up the hill. Jesus spoke to them: "Do not weep for me. Weep for yourselves...and you children. These were probably not women who were disciples of our Lord, but professional mourners. But in the midst of all that was going on, the calmest mind and heart in the crowd that day belonged to Jesus.

C. At the place of crucifixions

-When they finally arrived at the place of execution it was about 9:00 a.m. One of the first things they do when He gets there is to strip Him naked. All of His dignity and modesty and the purity of Jesus' physical person was stripped away, exposed, naked to die in the searing, scorching heat – groaning in agony – virtually eye-level with those who pass by, for His feet are only 2 to 8 inches above the ground.

-Have you ever had to disrobe so you could be examined by the probing, prying eyes of others

-doctors, nurses, X-ray technicians? He was stripped of everything; yet, He still found so much to give: To His executioners, He gave forgiveness...to a thief, He gave paradise...to His mother, He gave a son.

-They laid the crossbeam behind Jesus, quickly pulled Him backward. The beam was fitted under the back of His neck and, on each side, soldiers quickly knelt inside his elbows. Jesus gave no resistance.

-With his right hand the executioner probed the wrist of Jesus to find the little hollow spot. When he found it, he took one of the square-cut iron nails, held it against the spot, raised the hammer over the nail head and brought it down with great force.

-Two soldiers grabbed each side of the crossbeam and lifted. As they pulled up, they draped Jesus by the wrist. Lifting Jesus off the ground, they put the crossbeam in its prepared place at the top of the pole. Then they nailed His feet to the cross.

-With Him stretched out, hanging in place, cheers and mocking rise up from the religious leaders.

D. Temptations from Satan Luke 4:13

-In Luke 4:13, Satan tempted Jesus to avoid the cross and bow down and worship him – When Jesus was at His weakest - after 40 days without food. Then we are told that Satan left him for a more "Opportune time." He tempted Jesus all through His ministry, but never more than when He was on the cross. The word "opportune time" speaks of a fruit that is heavy on the branches...a time ripe for picking. Satan thought, "If Jesus is ever going to be ripe for picking, it's now."

-He had suffered the loss of sleep, blood, friends. He had never been more tired, weak and alone. He has watched Jesus beaten, mocked – never has Jesus been more in his reach. He uses the religious leaders first - "Come down from the cross". Then he uses the thieves - "Save yourself And us." But Jesus knows He can choose one or the other. He can save Himself...or, He can save us...But He can't do both.

E. The Soldiers at the foot of the cross John 19:23-24

-What a picture of the indifference of the world. While Jesus is paying for the sins of man, the soldiers are only interested in His undergarment!

II. The Witness at the Cross – John 19:19-22

-Isn't it just like God! He never leaves himself without a witness! He broadcast the gospel from the top of the cross – And with a most simple and concise message:

Jesus (Jehovah saves) – speaks of His Saviorhood

King of the Jews – speaks of His Sovereignty

-Jehovah was dying on the cross to save men. In John 19:21, the Jews wanted Pilate to add something to it.

-Did God use the sign? Luke 23:38-43

III. The Words at the Cross

Seven words fall from his lips. Here they are in the order we think He spoke them:

A. The word of Yearning Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them"

1. Jesus desires to forgive more than He desires to live!

2. The word “forgive” means to remove...to set out of the way. Jesus is saying, “Father, what they are doing to Me... set that out of the way. Don't let what they are doing to Me keep You from forgiving their sin.”

3. He doesn't want one sin to be under judgment...He wants to forgive it.

B. The word of turning Luke 23:42 Today...”

-Here is a man who is hanging at the turning point of his life and Jesus say, “Today...”

-What happened to change his mind about Jesus? His conduct, His prayer for forgiveness, The sign on top of the cross.

C. The word of churning John 19:26 “Behold, your Mother”

-Mary stares at the cross through blurred, tear filled eyes. She has tender memories of her son: His birth in a cold, dark stable; the first time His tiny head took her finger; the times she sung Him to sleep. She looks back at the cross. He is naked, thirsty, bloody. What did he do to deserve this?

-It is more than a mother can take. She can't stand to look and she can't stand to look away.

-And there is John – Standing between Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his own mother. John has his arm around Mary to comfort her. Mary prays that the Heavenly Father would take her Son – And His – quickly so He won't have to suffer more.

-Then Jesus speaks.

D. The word of spurning Matt 27:46 “My God...Why”

What's happening to Him? God is letting the sin debt be paid by His Son!!

E. A word of burning John 19:28 “I thirst”

F. A word of discerning John 19:30 “It is finished”

The task is fully done...The payment is fully made.

G. A word of learning Luke 23:46 “Into Thy hands”

He bowed His head and gave up the ghost...But dying men raise their head to catch that last breath. Not Jesus. He bows His head.

IV. The Wealth (Riches) of the Cross John 19:31-34

-Matthew tells us of the centurion who was at the cross in the last minutes of our Lord's suffering on the cross.

The centurion surveys the three crosses to make sure the job is done right...that nails are still holding and all is as it should be. He stops and reads again the plaque at the top of our Lord's cross. He has watched many men die on a cross, but none like this man! He is amazed at how Jesus reacts to His pain. For almost six hours Jesus has been on the cross.

His legs cramping. His back throbbing, tendons torn from His shoulders.

-Hanging on a cross one can draw breath in but he cannot exhale without pushing up with his feet that are nailed to the cross. For almost six hours Jesus has pushed up, breathed, and released, pushed up, breathed and released, pushed up, breathed and released. It was the only way He could remain alive. Why doesn't He react like the others – cursing, screaming, lashing out.

-Suddenly, darkness begins to settle in. It is not an eclipse or a dust storm. It is more like an enveloping gloom. The air grows cold, people are scared. Many think it's a bad omen. Some huddle together, others run! For three hours the sun refuses to shine!

-The sin of the world is beginning to settle on the shoulders of our Savior. If He is to pay the penalty for our sin, He must bear all its consequences, including the most severe consequence – the abandonment of His Father.

Jesus cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Jesus drinks the bitter dregs of the cup! The Father pours out His wrath for sin upon His Son as His Son becomes sin for us. The darkness veils what the Father allows his Son to suffer in those moments.

-After drinking that bitter cup, His fever worsened; His eyes burn; His throat is parched; His tongue is thickened and is pasted to the roof of His mouth – He cries, “I thirst”...then “It is finished”...then “Into your hands I commend my spirit.”

-While the centurion reads the sign one more time, the ground shutters beneath his feet, the earth groans, rocks break, soldiers are thrown to the ground, the three crosses sway in their stone sockets, stone-sealed tombs are shaken loose and the dead are shaken to life. The curtain in the temple is torn from top to bottom.

-In His three years of public ministry, Jesus has preached from many pulpits...from a synagogue, the side of a mountain, the dinner table, a boat...The cross would be His last pulpit; the crucifixion, His last sermon before His death.

-In a few hours the Passover would begin...not wanting to offend the Jews and desecrate their holy day with men on the cross, he gives the order, “Break their legs!” But when they come to Jesus, He is already dead, so the soldier puts the spear between the fifth and sixth

rib and punctures the heart of Jesus and blood and water come out.

-Soon the Jews would celebrate Passover. They would remember the Exodus, especially the last plague when the death angel came for the firstborn son. They would remember how the lamb was slain and the blood put on the door post as a sign of the Passover. That day the Lamb slain was Jesus. The doorpost where the blood was smeared was the cross. But when the death angel came, it didn't spare the firstborn Son.

-That was the arrangement. His life was not passed over so that yours and mine might be. The timbers of the cross became our doorway to heaven.

He took what we deserved!!

“On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame;.....”

The Burial of the Lord Jesus
John 19:38-42

“And that He was buried” I Cor. 15:4

It had been a long, tiring, eventful day for the Lord and everyone else involved.

-The day began just minutes after midnight. It was about 12:30 A.M. when Judas led the soldiers to the Garden where the Lord Jesus was arrested.

-Jesus faced six trials – three religious; three civil – where He was dragged from place to place for almost eight hours.

-During that eight hours He was cursed, mocked, beaten, spat upon, slapped and tortured.

-Between 7:30 and 8:00 A.M. Pilate turned Jesus over to the soldiers to crucify Him and by 9:00 A.M. Jesus was on the cross. He would remain on the cross until 3:00 P.M., when He breathed His last.

-But there was a problem: the Jewish high and holy day of Passover was at hand. The body must be removed from the cross before sundown when the Jewish sabbath began.

-So, the body of our Lord had to be taken from the cross and put into the tomb by 6:00 P.M. All the work of taking His body down and the preparation of the body for the tomb, and placing the body in the tomb and moving the stone in front of the mouth of the tomb – all had to be done in less than three hours.

-But who would do it? His mother, with the women? Maybe His disciples? Would His half-brother take care of it?

Read the Passage

All four Gospel writers give us the account of the burial of Jesus, each one adds a small detail.

When our loved one dies, a man from the funeral home comes to pick the body up. The family picks out the casket, brings the clothes that the person is to be buried in and gives any special instructions to the director.

-Care is given to make the loved one look as natural as possible when they are placed in the casket. A notice of the death and time of the services is put in the paper, so that all the friends can come and pay their respect. Then we have an impressive service in a quiet chapel or a lovely church. The sweetest songs are sung, comforting scriptures are read, the preacher offers a prayer and says some consoling words. Then we go to the cemetery, put the body in the earth, and cover the grave with flowers.

But Jesus didn't have a funeral like that. His body was wrapped in linen cloths, spices were placed on the cloths to stifle the smell of decay, and He was buried hours after he died.

-A very small crowd attended the service, probably only five to ten people – Joseph and Nicodemus and the woman, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James (the less) and Joses, Salome, mother of James and John, and maybe some of the other women. John and the mother of Jesus had most likely already gone.

-None of His family members were there – His half-brothers or sisters. None of His disciples.

I. The Preparation for His Burial

When the Romans crucified a man, they left the body on the cross to rot. Sometimes birds swooped in to pick at the flesh; often scavenger dogs converged and feasted on the carcass. The body might end up in smoldering fires on the city dump after days of suspension between earth and heaven. “The body of Jesus Christ was to be spared this.” Isaiah the prophet had predicted that the righteous servant would make His grave “with the rich in His death” Isaiah 53:9. That assured Jesus the best of care, and God prepared men who appeared to fulfill the prophecy. God the Father had made arrangements for our Lord's burial.

-Two unlikely men care for the body of Jesus: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the one who came to Jesus by night.

-The Bible says some good things about both of these men. They are both men of position and wealth. They were both religious

leaders with fine characters. And they were disciples of Christ. But there is one glaring defect in the lives of both of these men – They were short on courage...they were timid about their discipleship to Jesus...They were shy about confessing Christ openly.

-Both of these men were members of the Sanhedrin, the very religious group that put Jesus to death.

-The Gospel writers seem to go out of their way to say something good and positive about these two men as they stood with the crowd who said, "Crucify Him!"

-Mark says they were good and upright men (Mark 15:43).

-John and Matthew say they were prominent members of the counsel, who were waiting for the Kingdom of God. (John 19:38, Matt. 27:27).

-Luke says that they had not consented to the decision to put Jesus to death (Luke 23:51).

-But no matter how you slice it, they were disciples, but they were secret disciples!

- This is not the first time we meet secret disciples – see John 12:42-43
- Why were they secret disciples? Well, it's no secret!
 - John 19:38 - "for fear of the Jews"
 - John 12:43 "they love the praise of men more than the praise of God."
 - It's the same reasons folks are secret disciples today.
- Why is it in a day when folks are coming out of the closet, declaring how sinful they are and demanding recognition, that many believers fail to come out for Christ? You would think that we had something to be ashamed of!

The Bible warns us against being secret disciples: Luke 9:23; Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33

- If we don't confess Christ openly and take our stand in face of ridicule, I don't see what right we have to consider ourselves any different from Pontius Pilate.
 - It was fear that kept him from doing the right thing.
 - Do you respect Christ? So did Pilate.
 - Pilate's testimony was, "I find no fault in Him." Yet, he didn't have courage to take a stand for Him.

Let me show you the danger of being a secret disciple:

(1) If you decide to keep your loyalty to Christ a secret, you will constantly be embarrassed. When others around you are sinning – drinking, gambling, cursing – you will be embarrassed not to go along with them in their sin.

(2) It will increase your danger of failure.

(3) It will decrease your usefulness. These two didn't consent to the death of Jesus, but neither did they oppose it. What if they had spoken up and told of the day of their conversion.

(4) It will cause you to lose fellowship with Jesus. Think how they could have profited from three years of intense communion and fellowship with Jesus. They could have learned from our Lord's teaching, example, and instructions.

But to their credit – it did take courage to go to Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus.

- Everyone in Jerusalem would soon learn of their open confession. Some would be shocked... some angered. Some would say, "I suspected it all along." Some would rejoice!
- It took courage because as prominent members of the religious community, they ran the risk of being excommunicated from the Sanhedrin and the temple itself.
- Then, by handling a dead body they would defile themselves and that would prevent them from participating in the Passover celebration.

But how the heavenly Father's heart must have been moved and heaven's host must have applauded with joy to see these two Jewish men throw caution to the wind.

- They had been silent when they should have spoken.
- They had remained seated when they should have taken a stand.
- They had denied their faith when they should have asserted it.

-But no more! Though it seemed to be too late to make any difference, they were sick of playing it safe and choose to identify with Jesus in His death, because they had lost the opportunity to identify with him in His life.

Are you a closet Christian? Are you tired of hiding your light under a bushel?

Permission granted, Joseph comes with the linen; Nicodemus, with the spices. They hurry, as Jesus must be buried before sundown trumpets in the Sabbath.

Coming to the cross, they are stunned to view the lifeless slump of torn flesh that was once such a vital Savior. A sudden wave of emotion crashes against them, they fall to their knees. They weep for Jesus. They weep for the world that did this. And they weep for themselves. For all they didn't say. For all they didn't do. For all the times they stayed in the shadows.

Joseph plants a ladder under the crossbeam and ascends with uncertain steps. Timidly at first, for this is not the work of a rich man, he wrestles with the stubborn nail in Jesus' wrist.

Nicodemus watches from the ground. His robe is swept by a sudden gust of wind, and the words Jesus spoke to him that one windswept night rustle in his mind: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up."

Awkwardly, Joseph lowers the body to the outstretched arms of Nicodemus, who steadies himself under the weight. His arms tremble as they wrap around Jesus' lacerated back, slick with blood.

They put the body on the ground and stand back to get a hold of themselves. They survey the damage the Romans have done. The body lies there, pathetically, in a twisted pose.

His head is punctured from Jerusalem thorns. His face, swollen and discolored from Roman fists. His shoulders, pulled out of socket from the gravity of the last six hours. His hands and feet – bored and rasped by seven – inch spikes – expose ragged muscles and white bone. His back and rib cage, clawed from a savage cat-o'-nine tails.

Nicodemus sees before him the incarnation of Isaiah's words:

His appearance was so disfigured
Beyond that of any man
And his form marred
Beyond human likeness-

The two kneel beside this servant who has suffered so much, and they gingerly work their wet cloths over his blood-stained body. Nicodemus continues:

"He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

In the quiet courtroom of their hearts, they realize that loving Jesus in private was just another way of despising him and esteeming him not. And their hearts condemn them for their sins of omission.

Sponging down the rib cage, Joseph's hand touches the gouge made by the spear. He looks solemnly at Nicodemus as he, too, recalls Isaiah's words:

"He was pierced for our transgressions."

The descending sun hurries their work. They wrap the body with strips of linen, layered with aromatic spices. Both are ashamed for not doing more to prevent this brutal tragedy. They had influence. Their words carried weight. They could have objected more forcefully. They could have warned the disciples. They could have done something. Anything. But no, they had their careers to worry about.

Shouldering this guilt, they pick up the body to take it to Joseph's tomb. Suddenly, Nicodemus remembers one other thing from Isaiah's words:

"He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death."

-Literally the Hebrew reads, "His grave was appointed to be with the wicked; but with the rich man was His tomb."

As Nicodemus says this, he looks at Joseph, and they realize that they have done something. They have spared the Savior the shame of a criminal's burial, where he would have been thrown into the garbage dump outside the city and maybe His body burned. Jesus was to come forth bodily in three days. That could not happen if His body was allowed to stay on the cross and rot. Nor could it be done if his body was thrown on the garbage dump to be burned. God the Father, in His Sovereignty lead these men to prepare our Lord's body for burial. At His resurrection, His prepared body would show the proof of the nail prints in His hands and feet, the scar where He was pierced in His side.

The burial, signifying He was indeed dead, is part of the Gospel. I Cor. 15:1-4

This is the hour of late blooming love that draws them out of the shadows...to fearlessly befriend their Savior.

II. The Procedures of His Burial John 19:39-40

1. Look at what was used to prepare our Lord for burial:

a. Linen cloth. All through the Bible white linen cloth is a symbol of righteousness –

Rev. 19:8

b. The mixture of myrrh and aloes. This was a resin paste – like the mixture which was used to seal one piece of linen to another. “When the mixture dried, it furnished a powdered perfume.” The two ingredients were strongly aromatic and antiseptic. A dead body so torn and lacerated as that of our blessed Lord, would need an unusually large quantity of antiseptics or preservatives so that our Lord's body would not “see corruption” to some degree before His resurrection.

2. You will notice that the mixture of myrrh and aloes was about 100 pounds in weight. The custom was to use about half the body weight of spices; so, we can guess that the Lord Jesus weighed 175-200 pounds.

3. They would prepare the body by rubbing it with myrrh and aloes, then wrapping it with the linen strips. Then they would rub the mixture over the linen strips. That would seal it and keep the air out. They would begin with a finger; then wrap all the fingers that way, then the hand, the arm, and the whole body. In other words, they wrapped the body of the Lord Jesus like a mummy.

III. The Purpose of His Burial

-Jesus was placed in a borrowed tomb. When you borrow something you only use it for a short time then your need for it is over. I wonder how many times Joseph went by that empty tomb and worshiped the One who said, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

-By going there before us, Jesus courageously prepared the way for our passage into and beyond death. Life may be rough at times, but for the saint of God, when you get past the cemetery, all of our troubles will be over.

-A preacher was lost in the rugged area of West Texas. He came to a farmhouse and knocked at the door. A freckle-faced boy came to the door and the man asked him how to get to a certain destination. “Mister,” said the lad, “go right on down the road two miles. The road is pretty rough and sandy, but you will get through all right. Then you will come to a cemetery. Go right on through the cemetery and on the other side you will find a smooth, paved road which will lead you to your destination. It's a pretty rough road between here and the cemetery, but when you get to the cemetery, all of your troubles will be over.”

Friends, the road ahead may seem rough and hard, but when you get to the end of the way, all of your troubles will be over. God's home is just on the other side of the cemetery. And because of the Man who died for us, that can be your home and my home forever.

-Jeff Rogers preached in North Mississippi for over 50 years. The last thing he ever said, he said at a funeral. He stood at a funeral one day and quoted John 14:1-3. He said, “I really don't know what those mansions look like, but I soon will.” He sat down, slumped in his chair and was dead.

-I do not know what those mansions look like, but I soon will. For most of us, it won't be long until faith becomes sight.

The Not - Quite – Empty Tomb!

John 20:1-18

Before Reading the Passage

Our Lord had died such a horrible and painful death.

-For six long hours He had suffered on the cross...His body bruised and torn by evil men.

-Then, in a rush to get His body off the cross and into the tomb before sundown, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had to work quickly to prepare His body and get it into the tomb.

-We are told that Mary Magdalene and the other women were in the shadows, watching as Joseph and Nicodemus prepared the Lord's body for burial. They knew that Joseph and Nicodemus had to rush to get the body in the tomb by 6:00 p.m. and probably planned to come back early Sunday morning to more properly care for the body.

-The women watched as they placed the body on the cut-out slab inside the tomb. Then they would roll the stone in front of the mouth of the tomb.

-The large stone – most of them weighed about a ton – was sitting on an inclined groove and wedged into place with a piece of wood or a stone. When the wedge was removed, the stone could easily be rolled in place because of the incline.

-The Friday evening work was done before sunset.

-The first thing Saturday morning, the religious leaders once again showed up on Pilate's doorstep. It's doubtful Pilate himself had slept very well, either, so he was willing to listen to their request, “Sir...we remember that while He was alive that deceiver said, “After three days I will rise again.” So, give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day, otherwise his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that He has been risen from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”

-Did Pilate's heart skip a beat when he heard the Jews quote Jesus' words about the resurrection.

-Quickly, Pilate gave instructions, “Take a guard...Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.”

-They selected an elite Roman guard of four soldiers and posted them at the tomb with strict orders to keep watch twenty-four hours a day. The tomb was sealed by a rope that stretched across the stone covering the entrance. Each end of the rope was secured by clay to both sides of the opening. If anyone even tampered with the stone, the clay would crack and the deed would be known.

-Early Sunday morning, before dawn, in the darkness of night, the soldiers stood guard over the tomb, knowing that to go to sleep on duty was an offense punishable by death.

-Suddenly, without warning, "there was a violent earthquake." With the very ground on which they stood shaking beneath their feet, each pulled his sword and was ready for whatever was about to happen.

-Then the darkness was split by a brilliant light. An angel walked over to the stone that blocked the tomb's entrance, flicked it away as though it were dust, and then sat on it.

-The gaping hole where the stone had been revealed that there was nothing inside the tomb...Well, almost nothing! Jesus had been buried in the tomb late Friday afternoon, but when the stone was rolled away early Sunday morning, His body was gone! Only the empty grave clothes were left in place!

-It was in a garden ages ago that Paradise was lost; it was in a garden now it would be regained.

-I want you to see with me the not-quite-empty tomb:

Read the Passage:

According to Mark and Luke at least four women – maybe more – made their way to the tomb before daylight – Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James the Less, Joanna, and Salome.

-As they walked to the tomb, they began to ask, "Who will roll away the stone for us?" But when they got to the garden, they saw the tomb was open and empty.

Three scenes are given in this passage:

I. The Grief – Groping Faith John 20:1-2

-Can you imagine their feelings? Suppose you had just buried the one whom you loved best, and suppose that the next morning you learned that someone had gone to the grave and taken the body away. Naturally you would have been greatly disturbed.

-Some years after the death of Abraham Lincoln, grave robbers broke into the Lincoln family crypt and stole the body of the sixteenth president. The thieves held the body for ransom, throwing the entire nation into shock and dismay. The crisis ended when the ransom was paid and the body was recovered and buried again, this time under tons of concrete, in Springfield, Illinois. The shock that the nation felt when the body of Lincoln was stolen is much like that which the followers and friends of Jesus felt when His tomb was found empty just three days after His death.

-Love brought Mary Magdalene to the cross and, now, love brings her to His grave.

-When the women got to the tomb and the stone had been moved, Mary Magdalene jumped to the conclusion that someone had stolen the body. She turned on her heels and ran all the way back to Jerusalem.

-As Mary went to tell the disciples, many questions haunted her. Who took the body? The Roman government? The Religious leaders? And why? What would they want with it? Have they put Him on display to further mock Him? Have they given Him a criminal's burial by dumping Him outside the city in the garbage fire of the Valley of Gehenna?

-If she had continued with the other women, she would have spared herself the added distress of imagining that His body had been stolen.

-Mark and Luke point out that while Mary was on her way to Jerusalem, the other women went into the tomb and suddenly two angels in clothes that gleamed like lightning, stood beside them and said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!"

-In John 20:2 Mary saw only one fact: The stone was rolled away. She told Peter and John, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him." Mary said that the enemies stole His body. The enemies said the disciples stole the body.

-Mary was quick to proclaim that what she had seen was not of God - "They have taken our Lord." God had intervened in a miraculous way, but she saw it as man's interference.

-By the way, that stone was not moved to let Jesus out of the tomb, but to let the disciples in!

II. The Relief – Growing Faith John 20:3-9

-Peter and John ran to the tomb when Mary told them that someone had stolen the body. John outran Peter – maybe because he was younger or maybe because he hadn't been watching his fat grams. John stopped at the mouth of the tomb, but Peter charged up to the tomb, brushed John aside and went into the tomb, and then John followed Peter inside the tomb.

-Relief came:

A. For Peter and John

-John uses three different Greek words for "seeing" or "saw" (John 20:5,6,8)

(1) In John 20:5 we have the Greek word "Blepe": which means "to note". It is just the function of the eye. It was only physical sight and means to glance in or to look in. They saw the cloths lying there but the fact of the resurrection did not grip their hearts.

(2) In John 20:6-7 we have the Greek word "theorei" from which we get our word "theory."

-Peter confronted the evidence, but was confused. At that instant, he must have been angrier than ever. He thought, "His enemies crucified Him; now, to add insult to injury, they have stolen His body." I think Peter was about to explode!

-Look at what they saw: The grave cloths lying there on the stone shelf and the face cloth, folded together in a place by itself – Empty!

-The napkin was used, not only to cover the face, but to tie the jaw shut. Often when a person dies the mouth opens and it tends to mar the looks of the dead; There was a great contrast between the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus.

-While Lazarus came forth wearing his grave clothes, Jesus' body, though physical and material, was glorified and was now able to pass through the grave clothes, much in the same way that He later appeared in the locked room.

-And the state of the grave clothes indicated no struggle, no hurried unwrapping of the body by grave robbers, who wouldn't unwrap the body anyway, since transporting it elsewhere would be easier and more pleasant if it was left in its wrapped and spiced condition.

-All appearances indicated that no one had taken the body, but that it had moved through the cloth and left it behind in the tomb.

-There are two possibilities as to how the grave clothes were found: some believe that when Jesus passed through the grave clothes the weight of the spices caused the clothes to collapse, much like putting air in a balloon, wrapping it in cloth, then letting the air out of the balloon, and the cloth collapses.

-The other possibility is that, although the grave clothes were empty, the shape of where the body had been was still intact, much like the shell of a locust that has shed its skin and the shell of the locust is still clinging to a tree.

(3) John 20:8-9 The Greek word here for "saw" is "eiden", (i-den) which means "to perceive with understanding." This is not only physical sight, but spiritual sight. In other words, it all fell into place. It clicked with John.

-John began to say, "Peter, Peter! No one stole His body! He has risen! Look at the way the grave clothes are arranged. He had to have passed through the clothes!"

B. For Mary Magdalene John 20:11-17

1. Notice John 20:13, 15 Both the angels and Jesus asked, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

2. Jesus adds: "Whom do you seek?"

3. Jesus speaks one word: "Mary" She speaks one word: "Rabboni"

4. In His triumph Jesus could have paraded through the streets of Jerusalem. He could have knocked on Pilate's door. He could have confronted the high priest. But the first person our resurrected Lord appears to is a woman without hope. And the first words He speaks are, "Why are you crying?"

5. Mary is the first to hear His voice...the first to touch Him...the first to be commissioned by Him...the first to tell the glad tidings that He is alive!

6. Look how Mary responded...She embraced Him and didn't want to let Him go again for fear she would lose Him again.

• Notice John 20:17 – KJV says, "Touch me not" or better, "Do not cling to me" "Don't try to hold my physical presence here on earth."

• Some have said that Jesus did not want anyone touching Him because He had not yet ascended to His Father. Yet, He invited Thomas to touch Him.

• Others have said that He did not want to be touched because His body was in a bad shape and had partly decayed...but that cannot be for Ps. 16:8-11 says that God the Father promised that His Son would not see corruption...and, too, He was in His glorified body when He came out of the tomb.

7. There's a wonderful little insight in John 20:10 – Peter and John went home – Mary, the mother of Jesus was there. How she must have rejoiced as they told her what they had seen.

III. The Belief – Glowing Faith John 20:18

Someone put her testimony into a song: "I've Just Seen Jesus"

We knew He was dead...It is finished, He said

We had watched as his life ebbed away

Then we all stood around 'til the guards took Him down,

Joseph begged for His body that day.

It was late afternoon when we got to the tomb,

Wrapped His body and sealed up the grave

Oh, I know how you feel, His death was so real,

But, please listen, and hear what I say:

I've just seen Jesus...I tell you He's Alive
I've just seen Jesus...Our Precious Lord's Alive
And I knew, He really saw me too
And up 'til now, I've never lived
All that I've done before, won't matter anymore
I've just seen Jesus, and I'll never be the same again.

It was His voice she first heard, those kind, gentle words
Asking what was the reason for tears
And I saw to despair, my Lord is not there

And He said, "Child, it is I ...I am here!"
I've just seen Jesus...I tell you He's alive
I've just seen Jesus...our precious Lord's alive
And I knew, He really saw me too
And up 'til now, I've never lived
All that I've done before, won't matter anymore
I've just seen Jesus, and I'll never be the same again!

There is the Good News! JESUS IS ALIVE!

Low in the grave He lay, Jesus, my Saviour!
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Vainly they watched His bed, Jesus my Saviour!
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep his prey, Jesus, my Saviour!
He tore the bars away, Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes
He arose a victor from the dark domain, and He lives forever with His saints to reign
He arose...He arose! Hallelujah! Christ Arose!

Let me tell you what that means for those of us who have trusted Him. Because He lives, we too shall live.

Winston Churchill arranged his own funeral service. It was going to be held in St. Paul's Cathedral. He picked out the great hymns of the faith that would be sung at his funeral. He picked out the scripture that would be read and some of the things that would be said at his own home going. When he died, his wishes were carried out to the letter. There was a surprise element in the service. Right at the conclusion of the service he had arranged for a trumpeter, up in the loft area of the cathedral where no one could see him, to begin to play "taps" ...taps, the universal sound of the end of the day. Then silence ...a period of quiet. Then Churchill had arranged – after the period of quiet – for the trumpeter to play Reveille...it's time to get up, it's time to get up, it's time to get up in the morning!

I Thess. 4:16-18 He is no longer in a Tomb, but on a Throne!

The Man Who Missed the Sunday Night Service

John 20:19-29

Here is the setting: Our Lord has already died on the cross. Three days He was in the grave and now He is risen. The disciples are in the Upper Room; ten of them, that is. Judas is dead and Thomas, for some reason is not with the other disciples.

It is Sunday morning; the first Easter Sunday! That first Easter Sunday had been a busy day. Our risen Lord made four appearances that day.

- He appeared first to Mary Magdalene and then to the other women.
- He appeared to the two men on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24).
 - Then He appeared to Simon Peter (Mark 16:7). Peter had failed the Lord. He had denied Him. Peter needed to know that the Lord had forgiven him and that he could still be used of the Lord.
- Then He met with the ten disciples in the Upper Room (John 20:19-23).

Those ten disciples received four things from the Risen Lord that night:

A. His Presence – John 20:19

Jesus showed up! There is nothing like being in the presence of the Lord! “In His presence there is joy for ever more.” “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord”.

(John 20:20b)

B. His Peace – John 20:19b

He calmed their fears. His peace covers all our fears and uncertainties.

C. His Proof

I wonder what those disciples felt when He showed them His scars. Those scars were proof that their sins had been forgiven.

-The story is told of a woman who was dying. She had been reared a Roman Catholic, but had for many years had known Christ as her personal Savior and had long since left off going to confession, doing penance and attending the Catholic Church. Instead, she studied her Bible and gathered with those of like faith. When she was on her death bed, some well-meaning relatives sent the parish priest to see her. He offered to hear her confession and grant her absolution. The woman said to the priest, “Show me your hands.” The priest extended his hands and the woman examined them. Then she turned to the priest and said, “You are an imposter, sir. The one who forgives my sins has nail prints in His Hands.”

D. His Power – John 20:22

The word for “breath” is the same word used in Genesis when God breathed into Adam and he became a living soul.

But there was a fifth appearance of our risen Lord, eight days later – John 20:24-29.

When we think of Thomas the Apostle, two words often comes to our mind: “Doubting Thomas.” Our Lord never called him “Doubting Thomas,” but we do because of what we read in this passage.

The truth is that Thomas doubted, but he was not by himself when it comes to doubting.

1. John the Baptist doubted when he was in prison and was about to be put to death. He sent disciples to Jesus who asked Him, “Are you the Christ or do we look for another?” (Matt. 11). John the Baptist doubted, but we don't call him “Doubting John.”

2. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of Jesus on Easter Sunday and found Him NOT. Through her tears she thought Jesus was the gardener and said to Him, “Tell me where you have laid Him.” She doubted and, yet, we do not call her “Doubting Mary.”

3. When Jesus appeared to the Ten disciples in the Upper Room, they thought Jesus was a ghost. He showed them His scars and invited them to touch His hands and said, “A ghost does not have flesh and bone as you see me have.”

Thomas was a doubter, but he was a believer. A better term to describe him might be “Thomas the Questioner.”

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record nothing that Thomas said, but John records three questions.

Two things I would point out about Thomas:

I. Thomas' Questions

Three times Thomas speaks in John's Gospel. Here we see:

A. His Devotion – John 11:1, 16

Our Lord had been told that His friend, Lazarus, was sick unto death. The disciples did not want Jesus to go back to Bethany because the Jews had sought to stone Him there. Jesus said, “We are going back.” You can almost hear them talking among themselves: “But He will be killed. We may all be killed.” It was then that Thomas spoke up: “Let us go also and die with Him.”

-Now, that was a gloomy outlook, but the words of Thomas silenced their objections and inspired them to follow their master into the very jaws of death. Peter may have been the head of the group, but it was Thomas who sparked their courage.

-You cannot help but like and admire anyone who is ready to die for Jesus. Thomas' HEAD may be on crooked, but his HEART is as straight as an arrow. For Thomas, there might be death, but there could never be disloyalty. There might be doubt, but never disloyalty. He might have a thousand unanswered questions, but it never entered his heart to disown Jesus.

B. His Deliberation – John 14:1-5

Thomas had a question and had the courage to ask it. It is better to ask a question than to pretend you have all the answers and remain in your ignorance.

C. His Doubt John 20:24-25

This is the weak and unlovely side of Thomas. Why was he missing? If he was anything like the folks who miss services today, he may have given a number of excuses.

- He may have said, I've worked hard all week and Sunday is the only day I have to myself or for my family. I'm tired!

Someone wrote a true confession entitled, "Lord, I Lied!" It went like this: "Almighty God, as I sit here tonight, surrounded by newspapers and watching television, it has just come to me that I have lied to Thee and to myself. I said I was too tired to go to church tonight. That was not true. I would have gone to a baseball game or any other place I wanted to go. Being too tired seemed to cover up my indifference. God, have mercy on me. I have lied to Thee and to myself. I am not too tired, I'm indifferent. Warm my cold heart, O God, for that is the real reason why I stayed home. Amen."

- He may have lost hope. He believed right had been conquered by wrong; good by evil. So, what's the use?

- The real reason was because he didn't expect Jesus to be there. He didn't believe Christ had risen from the dead. He told the others in effect, "You go and mourn together if you like, but He won't be present. A lot of folks think Jesus might show up on Sunday morning, but not on Sunday night or Wednesday night."

The bottom line is that people miss worship because they lack one thing: commitment. No matter how you slice it, it all comes back to commitment!

We deprive ourselves of many benefits when we don't worship together at the Lord's house. Thomas missed several.

1. He missed the Opportunity to Worship.

I've heard folks say, "You don't have to come to church to worship God. You can worship God anywhere – on the golf course, in the woods, on the lake." Three things I want to say about that: Yes, you can worship God "out there", but do you? "Out there" your mind is on other things: the golf ball, the buck, the bass. If your mind is on God, you will be in His house, His church. The truest worship is found at the place set aside for His worship and service. Secondly, God has designed that believers worship together. There is something about the fellowship with believers that you can't get by yourself. Believers encourage each other and support each other and inspire each other. Thirdly, Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be in their midst."

2. He missed the Presence of the Lord

Have you ever tried to tell someone who missed a great service what they missed? Once you miss a great experience with Jesus, you've missed it. You can hear about it, but there's nothing like being there and experiencing it for yourself.

3. He missed Fellowship with other believers.

Two of the twelve were not there that night – Judas and Thomas. Judas had betrayed the Lord. He was dead. Where was Thomas? We don't know, but see the company he put himself with! His influence for Christ was hurt because he was not where he should have been.

4. He missed Seeing the Risen Lord.

When he did see Jesus the next Sunday, Jesus invited him to do what he said he would have to do to believe Jesus was alive. Jesus invited Thomas to put his hand in His side. When Thomas did see the Lord, he said, "My Lord and my God!"

5. He missed the Anointing of the Holy Spirit, empowering them for service.

6. He missed the Commission from the Lord. John 20:21b

7. He missed the Peace and Joy that comes only from Jesus. John 20:19, 21, 26

That's a lot to miss because your commitment level is not where it ought to be!

II. Thomas' Quest – John 20:28-29

Thomas called Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" He would give his all to Jesus because Jesus had given His all for him.

I gave my life for thee
My precious blood I shed
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead
I gave, I gave my life for thee,
What hast thou given for me?

The Real Last Words Of Christ

John 20-21

For as long as I can remember, preachers have preached on the so-called “seven last words of Christ”.

-Usually, we hear the sermon series during the weeks preceding Easter.

-But in speaking of the seven last words of Christ they speak of those words spoken by Jesus in the hours immediately preceding His death by crucifixion.

- “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” Luke 23:34
- “Woman, behold your son; son, behold your mother” John 19:26
- “Today you will be with me in paradise” Luke 23:43
- “I thirst” John 19:28
- “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46
- “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” Luke 23:46
- “It is finished” John 19:30

Those were the last words of Christ spoken on the cross, but they were not the last words spoken by Christ upon the earth.

-Actually, John's Gospel gives us seven last words of Christ spoken after His resurrection, which are as important and have as great a meaning than the words commonly thought of as the seven last words.

I. The Word of Comfort

-The risen Lord had already appeared to Mary Magdalene and told her to go back to the disciples and tell them that she had seen the risen Lord.

-It is on the evening of the day on which He arose from the dead that Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room. All were there but Thomas.

-We talk about doubting Thomas, but the rest of the disciples also had doubts. Mary told them what she had seen; they wanted to believe; they wanted it to be true, but there were still some doubts.

-The disciples were in the upper room, filled with fear, when Jesus appeared. He knew their fear, so He said, “Shalom be with you.”

-Shalom was a very common greeting for the Jews and it meant something like, “God bless you.” It speaks of harmony in personal relationships, but when Jesus spoke of peace, He meant more than God bless you. He was trying to calm their fears, to give them comfort and encouragement to cheer them up.

But it goes deeper. He offered two kinds of peace that come as a result of His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave.

A. It Means Peace with God

-According to the Bible men are at war with God. They are opposed to Him; so, it was up to God to make peace through Christ's cross.

-And that peace must be on God's terms. If you want peace in your heart, there is no room for bargaining. You must receive it the way God provides it. Jesus died to make peace. If you are going to enter into His peace, it must be by faith in Jesus and what He has done.

-Romans 5:1

-Jesus made peace between His Father and all who trust in Him by His reconciling death for sinners on the cross.

B. It is the Peace of God Phil. 4:6-7

It is the inner calm or tranquility promised to the believer based on unwavering confidence that God is able and willing to do what is best for His children. It is a military term meaning “to keep watch over.” God's peace guards believers from anxiety, fear, and distress.

II. The Word of Commission John 20:21

-The Great Commission occurs five times in the N.T., once at the end of each of the four gospels and once in the opening chapter of Acts.

-The repetition is significant. Anything God says is important; if something is repeated more than once, it is especially important. Besides, in this case, the emphasis is different.

- Matthew emphasizes the Authority of the Lord – Matt. 28:18-19
- Mark - emphasis is on the Final Judgment Mk. 16:16
- Luke presents the commission as the Fulfillment of Prophecy – Lk. 24:44-47
- Acts presents a program for world Evangelization – Acts 1:8
- John's version is unique in that it links our commissioning to the prior commissioning of our Lord.

-John's words are linked to the first of the seven last words, which occurs just two verses before (John 20:19). Lest we miss the connection, John repeats it in the verse which is our text. (John 20:21).

_This is not accidental. We must ourselves have peace, both inwardly and outwardly, before we can effectively share the gospel of peace with others.

-These words are a command to evangelize - "As My Father has sent Me, so I am sending you."

-Here is where many of us fail. We have Retreated from the world rather than Invading the world.

-We have retreated to where it is nice or safe or non-threatening. We spend millions of dollars to send faithful men and women overseas to tell the Good News there, but we will not go to our neighbors because it makes us uncomfortable.

-I Tim. 1:15 We also must share the gospel if we are to be faithful to our Lord's Commission.

III. The Word of Consolation John 20:22-23

-One of the points at which Roman Catholic and Protestant theology part company is over the interpretation of John 20:22-23.

-On the basis of this passage and others, the Roman Church has built its doctrine of a special priesthood to whom has been committed the power of absolution of sin. This practice and authority are exercised through the confessional.

-Most Catholics would acknowledge that it is God who forgives sin and this on the basis of Christ's death, But they would add that God does so in response to the action of the priest so that if the priest absolves, God forgives, and where the priest does not absolve, God allows sins and judgment to remain.

-Let me give you three reasons why Catholics are wrong at this point;

(1) Scripture teaches that none can forgive sins but God only. Mark 2:5-7

(2) There is no instance in the N.T. of any apostle taking on himself the authority to absolve or pardon anyone.

(3) Believers other than apostles were present when Jesus spoke these words and so whatever authority was given by Jesus was to Christians generally as well as to the apostles.

-What, then, is the meaning of the passage? This verse does not give authority to Christians to forgive sins. Jesus was saying that the believer can boldly declare the certainty of a sinner's forgiveness by the Father because of the work of His Son if that sinner has repented and believed the gospel. The believer, with certainty, can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God's forgiveness through faith in Christ that their sins, as a result, are not forgiven.

IV. The Word of Challenge John 20:27

-If I asked you what epithet you would give Thomas, all would likely say, "Doubting Thomas."

-Thomas was indeed a doubter. He was not lacking in courage, loyalty, or devotion to Jesus, but he did have a gloomy disposition. He looked on the darker side of things.

-John is the only gospel writer that tells us anything Thomas said. Three times Thomas speaks in John's Gospel and three times his attitude is gloomy.

(1) John 11 Jesus gets word that His friend, Lazarus, is sick. In John 10 the Jews tried to seize Jesus, but He escaped their grasp. Now Jesus tells them He is going back to Bethany near Jerusalem. They beg Jesus not to go back, but He makes it clear that He is going. Thomas speaks up and says, "Let's also go that we may die with Him." He's words were honest, loyal, and courageous, but not too cheerful. They were quite grim.

(2) John 14 Jesus told the disciples that He was going away. He spoke of heaven and a place where he was going to prepare for them. Thomas speaks up and says, "We don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

(3) John 20 All the other disciples had seen the risen Lord but Thomas, and he said, "I will not believe unless I put my finger in His nail print."

-Thomas was a believer, but he sure had problems with doubt!

-In Mark 9, a man brings his demon-possessed son to the disciples so they can cast the demon out. The disciples could not cast the demon out, so he brings his son to Jesus, explains that His disciples couldn't do anything to help his son and says, "If you can, do anything to help him." Jesus stopped him in mid-sentence. "If I can do anything! If you believe, all things are possible." The man answered, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." That's where I often am... "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

-Jesus told Thomas, "Stop doubting and start believing."

V. The Word of Commendation John 20:29

-Jesus is saying that some only seem to have faith if they have evidence. It is an inferior faith that has to have evidence, but it is a superior faith that is simply satisfied with what Jesus says – without visions or miracles or evidence.

-What is faith? Faith is believing God on the basis of His word and then acting upon it.

-It is that kind of faith that God blesses.

-Notice how John 20 ends – See John 20:30-31

VI. The Word of Caring John 21:15-17

- "Feed My sheep" Jesus assigned a task to Peter... "Tend My sheep!"
- "Shepherd My sheep for me." What a great responsibility! Jesus entrusted His sheep to Peter.
- It will take hard work, humility, understanding, sacrifice, patience, to care for spiritual sheep. That's what He calls all of us to do. Care for His sheep.

VII. The Word of Calling or Invitation John 21:19-22

- John's Gospel begins and ends by Jesus saying, "Follow me!"
- How? "If any man will follow me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."
- "Turn your back on all else and follow Me."
- Hebrews 12:1-2 captures our Lord's meaning. Follow His example.
- This is the primary difference between a joyless Christian and a joyful Christian; a defeated and a victorious one. The joyless Christian may have followed Christ in some general sense, but not with wholehearted zeal. The joyful Christian, on the other hand has found satisfaction in whatever God dispenses to him.

Eating Breakfast with Jesus

John 21:1-14

Before Reading the Scriptures

As you read the gospel of John, it seems that John is going to close his gospel with chapter 20.

1. John 20:30-31
2. Then he picks up his pen again. I believe there are three reasons the Holy Spirit led John to add this last chapter:
 - a. John wanted his readers to know that Peter was restored to apostleship by the Lord Jesus. I think that John loved Simon Peter as a dear brother in Christ. The other gospel writers had written that Peter had denied the Lord, but none of them had written a detailed account of the reconciliation that took place between Jesus and Simon Peter, and the New Commission that Jesus gave to Simon Peter. Apart from the information in this chapter, we would wonder why Peter was so prominent in the first twelve chapters of the Book of Acts.
 - b. John wanted to refute a foolish rumor that had spread among the believers that he would live until the return of the Lord (John 21:23). John makes it clear that our Lord's words had been greatly misunderstood.
 - c. John wanted to encourage us with the truth that failure is not final. Peter had failed, but Jesus would restore him and use him again.
3. Jesus had already risen from the dead. Twice He has appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. Now He is going to appear to them again and invite them to come and eat breakfast with Him.

Today, I would like to speak directly to those who aren't as close to the Lord today as you should be. Maybe the things of God aren't as sweet as they used to be. Maybe there isn't a hot, burning love for the Lord, His house, His Word and His people like there used to be. Maybe even your church attendance has become a thing of drudgery and toil. My duty today is to tell you that it does not have to stay that way! Jesus Christ is still the Friend of the fallen today.

I. The Backsliders John 21:1-3

- When the women came to visit the tomb on that first Easter morning, you will remember that Mary Magdalene, when she saw the stone was rolled away and the tomb empty, ran to tell the disciples that someone had stolen our Lord's body. But an angel appeared to the other woman after Mary left.
- In Mark 16:7 we are told that the angel told the women to go tell the Lord's disciples AND PETER that the Lord was risen indeed.
- The risen Lord had already appeared to the disciples on two other occasions. He appeared to them in Jerusalem. Now Jesus tells them to travel 80 miles to Galilee and wait for His appearance.

-We don't know how long Peter and the other disciples waited for our Lord's appearance, but

Peter got tired of waiting and he said, "I'm going fishing." And six of the other disciples say, "We'll go with you."

- Peter was a natural leader... but being a leader carries great responsibility with it. All six of the other disciples – without questioning Peter – said, "We'll go with you."
- Not one said, "But, Peter, our Lord told us to wait for Him here. Don't you think we should stay here?"
- Don't miss this truth: We never backslide alone...and the more influence we have, the more folks will backslide with us. It may be friends or family.

-What do you do when you've failed a friend?

- After you've cried till you're numb...After you've replayed the failure over and over in your mind...after you've run yourself down and can't think of any more names to call yourself?
- How do you deal with the pain? Peter dealt with it by going fishing.
- He thought he could forget about his failure out on the water.
 - But the sea refused to let him forget. As the waves slapped against the boat, his mind went back to a time when Jesus was in a boat with him and the other disciples and a storm came up. Jesus was asleep in the boat. They woke Jesus up and He calmed the storm.
 - Then he remembers when, in another storm, he walked on the water with Jesus – for a little while at least.
 - I wonder if Jesus delayed joining His disciples in Galilee on purpose in order to test the patience and obedient commitment in their lives. If so, Peter failed the test.

Have you noticed that sin loves company? When a person backslides, they usually aren't content to go it all alone and they will try to drag others down with them. You see it in families all the time! One will get cold on the Lord and before long everyone in the family is out of God's will.

What a shame it is when we feel the need to drag others into the same foolish pit into which we have placed our self! What's equally sad is the fact that there always seems to be those who are willing to follow the wayward child of God! Why are things this way? Because we like to surround ourselves with people who are on about the same level as we are. If we are right with God, we want to be around others who are right with God. If we are out of God's will, we feel rebuked by the lives of those who are living for the Lord and seek out those who are like we are. Sadly, we will often try to reproduce our spiritual temperature in the lives of those who are close to us. This is merely an effort to make self more comfortable.

It is interesting to notice who is in this list in John 21:1-3

-Did you notice that Peter and Thomas appear together. That's significant!

- Thomas: The doubter and unbeliever. But Jesus had dealt with his problem in John 20.
- Peter: The denier. We are about to get a detailed account of his restoration and recommissioning
- Then Nathaniel, James and John and most likely, Andrew and Phillip.
- ✗ These are the same disciples that are found in John 1. Jesus has not lost one of them.

✗ But you can't miss the fact that the church is made up of doubters, deniers, and sinners of many varieties; but forgiven folks. Not folks of superhuman faith, but normal, forgiven folks with all the failings we have!

II. The Barrenness John 21:3

"That night they caught nothing". This is the commentary on everyone who goes away from Christ. If you choose to go away from Christ, I can describe your life: Life loses its meaning; enthusiasm is gone; joy is gone. It can be summed up in one word – Barrenness. They caught nothing.

The way God alerts you that something is wrong in your life is when nothing is happening.

-Peter seems to have gone back to the old lifestyle from which Jesus called him.

-After dramatic failure in your commitment to live for Christ, have you slipped back into your old lifestyle? Spending time in the old places, with your old friends, using your old vocabulary, feeling at home among the old and familiar things of your past?

-Peter may have even enjoyed those first moments back on the boat. It felt good to be back on the decks again. But it was short-lived. Hours went by and Peter found himself fishing all night, yet, catching nothing.

Your spiritual condition shows on you! It shows in the priority you place on the things of God. Don't think for a minute that you are fooling anyone. No one, that is, but yourself! You can expect to lose much when you walk away from the Lord. You can never lose your salvation, but you will feel like you have. You can most certainly lose your fellowship with the Lord.

There will be the loss of peace, joy, and contentment. There will be the loss of blessings and rewards. Sin is a cruel taskmaster.

-There was a certain man who had been faithful in worshiping with other believers for many years. Then he became lax and stopped coming to the services. The pastor was burdened for his spiritual welfare, so one day he called in his home. The man invited him in and offered him a chair by the fire. The Pastor mentioned to the man how much he missed seeing him in the worship services. The man replied that he was saved and saw no need to go to church. He felt that he could worship just fine at home.

For several long moments they sat in silence and watched the burning embers. Then, taking the tongs, the pastor removed a hot coal and laid it by itself on the hearthstone. As it began to cool, its red glow soon faded. The man, who had been expecting a verbal rebuke, quickly caught the message. He was at church the next service!

III. The Beckoning John 21:4-5

-In the Greek this is put in the form of a question: "Children, you haven't caught anything, have you?"

-If you're fishing and haven't caught anything, the last thing you want is for someone to ask you if you have caught anything!!

-Notice John 21:6-11 (This is the only miracle that took place between the resurrection and the ascension.)

-When they threw the net on the other side of the boat, the net began to churn with fish - - large fish. They must have shouted and laughed and they were having a good time... then

John said, "Peter, that's the Lord."

-Peter jumped in the water to swim to Jesus...But while he was swimming, I wonder if he

thought back to Luke 5 when Jesus told him to go to the deep part of the lake and let down the nets.

-That time Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me", and Peter forsake all and followed Him...and here he is, back fishing again.

IV. The Brokenness John 21:9-14

-What did Peter think when he saw the fire of coals?

-What was Jesus going to say to him? Would Jesus ever let him serve Him again?

-Peter swam Towards the Lord and lead the other disciples Toward the Lord. It takes a big man to admit he is wrong before others.

-Hear the words: Come and Dine! Come and have fellowship with me!

What a joy to know that when we fail, Jesus wants to restore us – even more than we want to be restored!

Sometimes when we fail the Lord, we may know that the Lord has forgiven us, but it is hard to forgive ourselves.

-Jesus knows that and, yet, just as He took the initiative in going to Peter, He comes to us to not only forgive, but to restore.

Someone said: "Jesus can mend a broken heart, if we give Him all the pieces." How about you? Have you gone away from the Lord? He wants to restore you.

The Christian's Supreme Question

John 21:15-25

Before Reading the passage

In John 20 our Risen Lord appeared to the disciples as a group twice – once without Thomas and then eight days later with Thomas present.

- Then Jesus instructs the disciples to leave Jerusalem and go 80 miles to Galilee and to wait for Him there. We don't know how long they waited in Galilee before Peter got tired of waiting and said that he was going fishing. Six of the disciples said, "We're going with you." They fished all night and caught nothing.

- Then that beautiful scene takes place with Jesus on the shore and the disciples in the boat and Jesus instructs them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. And when they do, the water begins to churn with fish and they caught 153 large fish...and Jesus invites them to "come and dine" - come and fellowship with Him around the breakfast that he has prepared.

- Breakfast is now over and we are about to be given the details of Peter's restoration and recommissioning, for Peter had failed his Lord and denied Him three times.

What does God expect of us? Of you and me?

- Billy Graham's daughter, Anne Graham Lotz, in her book "Just Give Me Jesus", tells about being invited to attend an institute for Christian leaders. The primary speaker at the institute was a Godly, elderly Bible teacher whose British accent made anything he said profound and God seemed to be speaking through him. During the conference the speaker asked, "Do you know what God expects of you?" After a short pause, he answered his own question, and in a way that Anne said that she had never forgotten. To the hushed audience, he replied simply, "Failure!"

- Ann said that she was stunned. She thought, "Surely he will explain himself." Then he repeated, "All God ever expects of you is failure." Anne said that she wanted to raise her hand, wave it wildly, and shout, "I can live up to the expectations of God! I know how to fail!" Then with a smile and a twinkle in his eye, the speaker said firmly, "But...God has given you the Holy Spirit so that you need never fail."

- There is the secret to living the Christian life successfully. God would never expect more from me than the Holy Spirit would do in and through me if I would allow Him the freedom to do so.

- God created us in the first place. God knows how He formed us and remembers that we are but dust.

- I'm just a little dust person infused with the very breath of God.

- And God wants to use us for His glory! But we must answer His supreme question correctly if He is going to be able to use us.

Read the passage

I think it is worth noting that Jesus waited until after the meal before confronting Simon. After the meal the disciples were at ease and were prepared to receive any word that might come from the lips of Jesus.

- With the other disciples quietly listening, Jesus turned and spoke directly to Peter. "Simon, do you love Me?"
- No one enjoys being questioned about an area of life in which he has failed to measure up to his best. If you've had that kind of experience, then you can easily identify with Peter.
- Was Jesus being cruel to Peter by asking him that question in front of the other disciples? No.. the disciples needed to know what was in Peter's heart, too.
- No one enjoys being questioned about a failure, but if you are going to move on from that failure, you need to deal with the failure and then move on...let the failure be used to make you stronger.
- Didn't Jesus know whether or not Peter loved Him? Of course, He knew. He knows the depth of every heart. But He needed to bring Peter to publicly declare his love.
- Peter never asked Jesus if He loved him...but Jesus did question Peter.

Notice some parallels between this scene and the incident of the three denials:

-Both events took place around a charcoal fire.

-In both of these accounts, Peter is called "Simon Peter" (the Spirit of God, who inspired the writing of the gospel through John, always uses the name "Simon" to indicate the old nature of Peter, the one who vacillates; not the Rocklike Apostle.)

-In both accounts, Peter is questioned three times and must answer three times – either three denials or three affirmations of love.

Why would Jesus ask Peter about his love for Him?

-Because there is nothing more important to God than our love for Him.

-Deut. 6:4-5

-Without love for God all that we do or say is worthless – 1 Cor. 13...speak with tongues of men and angels...faith to move mountains...giving our goods to feed the poor...sacrificing our bodies to be burned.

Look at the Christian's supreme question with me. It is a question of:

I. Comparison John 21:15

"More than these" - We don't have the privilege of seeing where the eyes of Jesus looked or where He gestured. There are at least four possibilities:

A. Do you love Me more than these Fish?

1. Do you love Me more than your livelihood...more than your accomplishments...more than your financial security?
2. Each one of those fish represented dollar signs to them. They were status symbols. They were their achievements. Do you love Me more than these?
3. Three years before Jesus had called Peter from the fishing trade; now he goes back.
4. What is there in your life that grabs your attention; that calls for you to give your time, your energy, your love, your priority ahead of Jesus?
5. If Jesus was saying that, He might have said, "Simon, if that is priority in your life, just leave those fish for three hours in the hot sun and see what happens to them. What you have found to be priority in your life begins to smell, to decay, to rot. What you have allowed to be priority, in time, will be nothing at all – except that you would like to get rid of them."
6. I wonder, even as I'm preaching, if some of you are thinking about your jobs, what you need to do there tomorrow...or are you thinking about some pleasure, golf, camping, hunting trip?

B. Do you love Me more than you love these Friends?

1. Are you committed to Me more than you are to your friends?
2. You think a lot about what your friends think about you, don't you Peter? What they think and what their opinion is about you carries a lot of weight with you, doesn't it?
3. Is fellowship with them more important than fellowship with Me?
4. Peer pressure is not limited to young people. Adults are often worse.

C. Do you love Me more than these other Followers love Me?

1. Remember that before he denied Jesus, Peter had claimed to love Jesus more than

all the disciples. "All men may forsake You, Lord, but I will lay down my life for You," he said.

2. Clearly, Peter has regarded himself as more faithful and more committed than the other disciples.
3. Simon was like many of us. He declared more than he delivered.
4. Jesus was interested in the level of Peter's love for him.

D. Do you love Me more than your Folly?

- Your old way of life? The old places and people and practices. After all, Peter did turn back to the old way for a while.

II. Correction

-The first time Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me?" the word Jesus used for love was "Agape." It is the fullest, highest, richest, most unconditional love we will ever know. It is the love described in John 3:16.

-Peter's response to this first question was not, "Yes, Lord, I agape You," but "Yes, Lord, You know I Phileo You...I like You as a dear friend."

-The third time Jesus asked, "Simon, do You Phileo – like – Me?" Peter replied, "Lord, You know all things, You know that I Phileo – I like You."

The conversation between Jesus and Peter was actually something like this:

- "Simon, son of John, do you truly love Me more than these?"
"Yes, Lord, You know that I like You as a dear friend."

- "Simon, son of John, do you truly love Me?"
"Yes, Lord, You know that I like You as a dear friend."

- "Simon, son of John, do you like Me as a dear friend?"
"Lord, You know all things; You know that I like You as a dear friend."

The third time John could tell by the look on Simon's face and the tone of his voice that Jesus had grieved Peter by asking him the question three times.

-It is the only time that we read of Jesus grieving a human soul, for He had come to heal and comfort them. But Jesus did so only because it was good for Peter.

-Notice that each time Peter answered the Lord's question, he acknowledged the Lord's inner knowledge of his heart.

- "Lord, You know all things. You know because You are all-knowing. You know by what You see in my heart even now. You know the level of love I have for You now."

-Jesus asks us, "Do you love Me?" Be honest! He knows your heart!

Why didn't Peter confess agape love for Jesus?

-I think Peter was saying, "Lord, I will not brag any more of my great love for You. How can I the way I've failed? I have already shown my weakness and denial. It would be dangerous for me to boast when I'm so likely to fail."

- "Lord, compared to your great love for me, I can only say I like You as a dear friend."

Do you love Jesus? Why do you love Him? The sixteenth-century Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier described his love for the Lord this way:

Why, O blessed Jesus Christ
Should I not love You well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven
Or of escaping hell.

Not with the hope of gaining things,
Nor seeking a reward;
But as You proved Your love to me,
O ever-loving Lord.

And so, I love You, and will love,
And all your praises sing;
Because You are my loving God,
And my eternal King.

III. Commitment

Here is a call to action!

-Love can only be revealed by an act. Words alone cannot reveal love. Even if God were to write the words "God is love" in letters of fire in the clouds, that wouldn't tell us anything.

-Love must be expressed! With blood-red ink Jesus penned His dying message to us. It reads: "I love you!"

-John 15:13 "Greater love hath no man than this..."

-Rom. 5:8 "God demonstrated His love toward us..."

-Now the Lord commissions Peter to "feed His lambs...tend His sheep...feed His sheep."

-Because of the riches of God's grace, Peter was a greater disciple and a greater preacher because of reaction to his fall.

-When Jesus told Peter to feed his sheep, that shows completeness of forgiveness.

-If Jesus had just said, "Your sin is forgiven...your transgressions are blotted out...your iniquity is covered," that would have been one thing. But to also say, "Feed My sheep," is complete forgiveness – not only Forgiven but Trusted!

-We hear a lot about falling From grace. Is that what happened when Peter denied the Lord? No, he didn't fall From grace; he fell Into grace, for Jesus not only forgave him, but Trusted him with the Lord's sheep!

-O, the riches of God's grace!!

Do you love Jesus?

I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, my Lord,
But how much I love Thee, my actions will show.

Some may have more education than you...some may have more insight than you...some may have more abilities than you...but no one can love more than you can love.

Lord, What About My Brother
John 21:17-25

Look again at the two words that Jesus spoke to Simon Peter in John 21:19. "Follow Me."

1. The last command Peter received from the Lord was the same as the first command he heard from Jesus ... Follow Me.
2. Follow Me ...Learn of Me ...Follow my example ... Follow continuously ...Never let up.

These last verses of the Gospel of John focus again on our Lord's dealings with Simon Peter.

I. Peter's Revelation from the Lord John 21:17-18

-Jesus has just assigned Peter to the task of preaching the Gospel. Now He tells him that life for him is not going to be a bed of roses. Troubles will beset him on every side, and he will finally meet a violent death.

-Christ's servants never have an easy life. Not only are their lives filled with burdens and responsibilities, but they also must suffer criticisms and persecutions and false accusations.

-But that is to be expected. Here is what Jesus said:

- a. "In this world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
- b. Again He said, "Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake..."
- c. Psalms 34:19... "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

-We learn a wonderful truth in these verses; and that is that the future history of Christians, both in life and death, is foreknown by Christ.

- a. There is no such thing as luck, chance, or accident in the Christian's life. Everything from beginning to end is foreseen...arranged by one who is too wise to make a mistake, and too loving to do us harm.
- b. Jesus predicted Simon Peter's death... even the manner in which he would die. Jesus told him that he would die on a cross (note John 21:18). Peter, like his Lord, lived under the shadow of the cross.
- c. I am grateful that the Lord has not told us our future to the degree that He did Peter. If the Lord told us that we were going to have nine (9) good things happen to us this month and one bad thing, most of us would worry ourselves silly over the one bad thing. Nine of ten good things...and we'd spend our time thinking about and trying to prevent the one bad thing.

-Eusebius, the church historian, tells us that in 61 A.D., under Nero, Peter and his wife were imprisoned. One morning Peter walked with his wife to the place of execution and he witnessed his wife's crucifixion. She was killed before his very eyes. He stood before her and said, "Remember our Lord." He was taken back to his own dungeon, stayed there overnight and his submissive spirit caused the jailor to trust Christ. Just before Peter died, he stood before the cross and said that he was not worthy to die the same way that his Lord died. He requested to be crucified feet upward...hands downward...upside down. He was led where he did not want to go, but he submitted to it.

-Notice John 21:19 He would glorify God in his death. He would honor God in his death and be honoring to God in his death.

-When some folks were finding fault with the doctrines and practices of the Methodist, John Wesley said, "At any rate, our people die well."

-It is important not only that we live well, but that we also die well. Without murmurs or complaining, but silently enjoying the inward peace that only Christ gives. We may glorify God in death, by testifying to others the comfort and support that we find in the grace of God.

-Psalms 23:4

II. Peter's Rebuke from the Lord John 21:20-23

-Peter was bad about taking his eyes off of Jesus.

a. Matt. 14:30 Peter took his eyes off of Jesus because of a Crisis.

Walking on the water to Jesus, the waves and wind scared him.

b. John 18 Peter took his eyes off of Jesus because of Circumstances.

Standing at the enemy's fire at the trial of Jesus he was afraid to take his stand for Christ.

c. John 21:21 Peter takes his eyes off Jesus because of another Christian.

-Lord, what about my brother? Peter may have been slightly jealous of John's special closeness to Jesus. That may have been the reason he asked about John's future.

-Jesus said, "Peter mind your own business. Don't worry about what others are doing. Just be faithful to what God wants you to do in your life."

-It is amazing to think how effective the church would become if we would all follow the word that Jesus gave to Peter: Don't mind your brother's business. Just follow Me."

-Here's where a lot of problems begin in a church...and where a lot of competition and rivalry begin between brothers and sisters in Christ.

-I Tim. 5:13 A busybody is someone who is busy about everybody's business except their own. They go house to house ...these days by phone...and spend hours learning about everybody's business when it's none of their business.

-Jesus said, "Peter, mind your own business."

-When we start trying to tend to everyone else's business it always causes problems.

"Trouble in the Carpenter's Shop"

There was trouble in the carpenter's workshop and the tools were having a row.

One of them said, "It's the hammer's fault. He is much too noisy."

"Nonsense," the hammer protested, "I think the blame lies with the saw.

He keeps going backwards and forwards all the time."

The saw shouted, "I'm not to blame. I think it's the plane's fault. His work is too shallow; he does nothing but just skim the surface."

The plane objected loudly: "I think the real trouble lies with the screwdriver, always going round in circles."

That's ridiculous," the screwdriver said, "The whole trouble began with the ruler, because he is always measuring other People by his own standards."

The ruler was furious. "Then what about the sandpaper? Surely he is always rubbing people the wrong way."

"Why pick on me?" said the sandpaper, "I think you ought to blame the drill for being so boring."

Just as the drill was about to protest, the carpenter came in and began to work. Using every one of those tools, he eventually built a beautiful pulpit, from which the gospel of peace was eventually preached to thousands of people.

"Peter, don't worry about what I've got for somebody else to do. And don't worry about them not doing it the way you would do it. Follow Thou Me!"

II. The Response of Peter to the Lord

As we close the Gospel of John, we see a risen Saviour commanding a redeemed soul to follow Him. The next book in the Bible tells us how faithfully Peter did follow Christ. He became the preacher at Pentecost, a leader in the Early Church, a man who never turned back, a man who loved and served his Saviour unto the end. Then came the day when Jesus' predictions came true. Peter was bound by an enemy of Christ and cruelly put to death.

But when he suffered the last agonizing pain and shed the last drop of blood and breathed his last breath, was it death? No, it was life, life everlasting. Life glorious, life in heaven forever with Jesus. No more toil and trouble. No more sweat and tears. No more chains in prisons. No more grief. No more disappointment. Instead, the face of Jesus. I wonder what Jesus said when they met. I wonder what Peter said. I can imagine that Jesus said, "It is all over now, Peter. You were faithful to your trust. You have done well. You are at home now. Just rest and enjoy it all." And I can imagine that Peter said, "Lord, it's worth all the trouble and persecution just to see You again and hear Your voice. I thank You for saving me and forgiving me for all my sins and bringing me home to heaven. I am going to spend all of eternity thanking You for what You did for me."

Peter lived his life for Christ, then gave his life for Him. When he finally went home to heaven, he had thousands of trophies to lay at His feet. I hope that when you and I are released from the shackles of this earth, that we, too, will have some trophies to lay down at Jesus' feet.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.