

Last Day of Class

Luke 24:44-53

Last words are important. We remember and cherish the final words of departed loved ones. Teachers and professors try to make sure that we understand what the most important facts in their class when they prepare us for the final exam.

Jesus gathered his disciples for one last class and shared with them the most important facts that would be the principal tenets of Christianity. Let's listen closely to our Lord's words on the "**Last Day of Class**"

I. The Bible is True (Luke 24:44)

Jesus knew that his followers needed something to guide them and to inspire them. Earlier Jesus had opened the Scriptures (Old Testament) to the Emmaus followers in order to show that the way of cross is the way of victory (**vv.25-27**). Now he opened the Scriptures to the entire group (**v.44**). He repeated the earlier lesson and added to it the message of repentance and forgiveness for all nations (**vv. 45-47**).

The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms is a way to describe the entire Old Testament. In other words, the entire Old Testament points to the Messiah. For example, his role as a prophet was foretold in **Deut. 18:15-20**; his sufferings were prophesied in **Psalm 22** and **Isaiah 53**; his resurrection was predicted in **Ps. 16:9-11** and **Isa. 53:10-11**.

Today, the Bible is still God's Word and it is timeless because our God is eternal. Man is still a sinner and needs a Savior. We are still sheep in need of a great Shepherd.

Today we have the Old and New Testaments to guide us and inspire us. God has inspired Christian writers throughout the past 2,000 years to help us understand the scriptures. We have more resources today than ever before. The Internet has opened libraries and resources beyond our wildest comprehension.

Several years ago I had an illustration in how little man actually knows. A renown Pathologists at UAB hospital was speaking to a group of ministers. He said, "We may use a equipment that costs millions of dollars but we are not that far removed from the tribal witch doctor." Our most brilliant minds are going feel like kindergarteners on the first day in heaven.

II. Forgiveness of Sins is Available (Luke 24:47)

Those who were raised in a more liturgical church have recited the "**Apostles' Creed**" on many occasions; "**I believe in the forgiveness of sins!**" Do you really? We need to talk about the forgiveness of sins and how to experience forgiveness.

1. Why Do We Need To Talk About The Forgiveness Of Sins?

First, Our Society Minimizes Sin.

All you need to do is pick up an issue of People magazine or tune into "Entertainment Tonight," and you will see not only the minimization of sin but the glorification of that which wrecks lives.

Several years ago Time magazine had an article about Hugh Hefner, in his mid-seventies, as he celebrates the 50th anniversary issue of Playboy magazine. He was asked if he could be interested in a 50-year-old woman. He responds, "Romantically, my interests are younger." When asked how many girlfriends he has now, he answers, "Six." When asked if he sleeps with all of them, he declares, "It is just like an ordinary relationship times six. A lot of single guys and women date more than one person. The only thing that is different here is that we do whatever we are going to do together. It is very nice. Makes it like a little family."

Even an hamburger chain's ad campaign brazenly featured Hugh Hefner, declaring how much he likes variety, both in terms of women and fast food items. The society which once would have been outraged at such comments now finds them entertaining. Nothing is said about the lives of the hundreds of women he has consumed and discarded. Where are they now? Where is the outrage that the hamburger chain would approve such a morally outrageous ad campaign?

I could spend the entire message just giving evidences of the way our society minimizes sin. Some give the excuse of genetic disposition. "This is the way I am built. What else can you expect?" Others use the excuse of environmental influence. "I am the result of my social conditioning." We exchange the word "sin" for "addiction" or "dysfunction."

All these notions are helpful in understanding our human condition but they often mask the real problem - we love to sin!

My preacher father's warned me when I started preaching about pointing fingers. He said, "Always remember when you put one finger at the congregation, three fingers are pointing back at you." **I too am a sinner in need of God's grace.**

But I think it is clear to see the truth of these words: "We have gone from 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' to 'clients in the palm of a satisfied therapist.'"

Second, The Bible Says Anyone Who Genuinely Believes He Is Not A Sinner Is Self-Deceived.

Mark Twain once said, "Man is the only animal that blushes or needs to."

The Bible says, "***For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .***" (***Romans 3:23***). It goes on to say, "***For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord***" (***Romans 6:23***).

The Bible also says, "***If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us***" (***1 John 1:8-10***).

An excellent definition of sin: **"If there is anything I do, or attitude I have, that disobeys God, breaks His heart and hurts others and/or myself, that is sin. If there is anything I leave undone, in action and/or attitude, that I could reasonably do that would bring joy to God, others and myself, that is sin."**

Third, Jesus Came To Give Forgiveness Of Sin.

Remember how the angel came to Joseph as he was struggling with the pregnancy of his fiancée, Mary? The angel reassured Joseph in a dream that this was God's activity, with these words: ***"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins"*** (Matthew 1:20-21).

That's at the beginning of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Let's take a look at what Jesus said about his purpose in coming at the very end, prior to His ascension into heaven. He said, ***"Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem"*** (Luke 24:46-47).

Years later, the Apostle Peter wrote this about Jesus: ***"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed"*** (1 Peter 2:24).

This is Good News, not bad news. The bad news is that we are sinners. The Good News is that we can be forgiven. This is GRACE -- God's unmerited favor.

Fourth, You Are Forgiven, Not Just From Something--But To Be More.

For some, the reception of forgiveness is an end in itself. They clutch the one-way ticket to heaven, so proud they have responded to the invitation to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. They somehow think that forgiveness is the end. They don't realize it is just the beginning! You and I are not just forgiven from sin, we are given a fresh slate to begin a new life, empowered by the Holy Spirit to not be in bondage to the debilitating action of sin in our lives.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

You see, they now have a whole different identity. That's how all encompassing God's forgiveness is! They move on to something more. You and I can too!

2. How Do We Experience Forgiveness?

There are four actions on your part that will enable you to experience forgiveness. That forgiveness is there for you, but that does not mean that each of us appropriates it.

First, RECOGNIZE Your Need For Forgiveness.

Anselm, once the Archbishop of Canterbury, declared, "You have not yet considered the heavy weight sin is."

Think about that. Have you considered the heavy weight sin is? I am talking to both believers and nonbelievers in Jesus Christ. We don't quit struggling with sin the day we are born again. The fact is that we still have the old nature that battles with the new nature. Satan is still functioning in this world. Temptation is there and although those of us who, in the past have received Jesus Christ as savior are forgiven of past sins, we need to keep up to date with Him.

The story is told about a little boy whose mother told him it was time to get ready for Sunday School. He said, "I am not going." She said, "Oh, yes you are!" He said, "I don't want to go." She said, "I don't recollect asking

you if you want to go. You are going." He then asked, "Why do I have to go to Sunday School?" She responded, "To learn to be a good little boy."

This is where the little fellow demonstrates to us tremendous insight into human makeup. His answer was, "I already know how to be a better little boy than I want to be."

Whether you are a believer or a nonbeliever, there is a kind of war going on inside of you, between what Satan would love you to be and what God would dream for you to be. The Apostle Paul recognized this within himself. In [Romans 7](#), he describes the battle going on within. He tells how the things he wanted to do he didn't do, and the things he didn't want to do he ended up doing.

What's important is, he recognized his need for forgiveness. Do you?

Two, REPENT Of Sin.

David put on sackcloth and ashes in repentance for his sin. That's a humble posture for a proud king.

Isaiah saw the holiness of God and became aware of his own unworthiness and uncleanness before the righteous holy God. That brought him to his knees in repentance. We need the same posture.

Peter declared, "I am a sinful man." I need to say that in heartfelt sincerity, and so do you.

In [Luke 18](#), Jesus tells the story about two men going to the temple. One, a Pharisee, stood up and prayed about himself, thanking God that he was not like other people: robbers, evildoers and adulterers. He proudly declared that he fasted twice a week and gave a tenth of all he had to God. He even declared himself to be so much better than the second fellow, the tax collector. "Aren't you lucky to have me God?" was his attitude.

The other man, a tax collector, sat nearby and beat his chest in repentance and prayed this prayer: **"God have mercy on me, a sinner."** Jesus distinguished between the two. One probably had lived a better life, but did not go away forgiven. The other fellow, who had sinned more, genuinely repented, humbly asked forgiveness, and went away forgiven.

Both fellows needed to see their need. Both were privileged to be forgiven. One simply didn't realize his need.

If you are a nonbeliever, now is the time to come to your senses, repent of sin and put your trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. If you are a believer, but in some areas of your life you have been hedging your bets, playing fast and loose in terms of God's commands, it is important to face up to reality and come to your senses and repent of sin.

[Psalm 51:17](#) hits the nail on the head. It reads, **"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."**

Third, RECEIVE Forgiveness.

Grace is free. It's almost too good to believe, isn't it? We need to stop, take a break from all of our activity, the clutter of our lives, our arms so full of this and that, and put it all down, look the Savior in the eyes and receive His unspeakable gift of salvation, of forgiveness, of new life, a whole new life that He offers.

Fourth, RECIPROCATE Forgiveness To Others.

Some of us want forgiveness, but we won't give it to others. Jesus said, "*Unless we forgive others their sin, our Father in heaven will not forgive us our sins.*" *In the Lord's prayer he taught, ". . . forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."*

Reciprocity is a wonderful concept, as well as a great practice. It levels the field. It helps the action go two ways. It's not just me receiving grace, I also become the dispenser of grace. I am not only the receiver of gifts, I am the giver of gifts. We are all in this together. That's what makes the family of God a great community when it functions the way God designed it to function, and that's why it looks so ugly when we fail to practice what we preach.

III. Share What You Have Seen! (Luke 24:48)

They who accompanied Jesus from Galilee, who watched him die, and to whom he had appeared have a special function in God's redemptive work. They are *witnesses of these things*, the foundation for the historical trustworthiness of the gospel. That a man like Jesus lived, that he died, and that he rose from the dead is vouchsafed by their testimony. Luke claims that the foundation of his Gospel is the message of these *"eyewitnesses and ministers of the word"* (John 1:1-4).

IV. The Holy Spirit Will Empower, Guide And Comfort You! (Luke 24:49)

The Lord from glory will *send the promise of the Father*. As interpreted in Acts, this promise is the message of Joel invoked by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16 ff). The church's Lord is in glory, but the church is not left without direction. The vacuum that is left by the removal of the physical presence of Jesus will be filled by the Spirit.

The disciples are instructed not to leave Jerusalem until they are *clothed with power from on high*... After the experience of Pentecost believers will possess resources of strength and leadership for their task.

V. Christ is Coming Back! (Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9-11)

These verses are a short account of the ascension, which is described also in Acts 1:9-11. The promise that He will return has been the sustaining hope in the heart of every Christian since this day.

How Did The Disciples Respond To His Ascension? (Luke 24:50-53)

Earlier when Jesus had been taken from them by death, they were completely demoralized; but now, after being assured of his resurrection, they were able to rejoice even though he had parted from them. What could better show the difference made by their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

Hopelessness and frustration have been transformed into *joy* by the disciples' resurrection faith. They now understand how much better and higher was God's will and purpose than their own earlier limited and distorted understanding of it. Theirs is the sacrifice of unbroken praise to God who has shown them how suffering and glory are indissolubly linked. Their Lord has been exalted to God's right hand. From there he

beckons to them as they also walk through suffering to glory in obedience to the purpose that he has set before them (**Rom. 8:17**). The story of that triumphant pilgrimage remains to be told in the book of Acts.

A.T. Robertson speaks for all believers everywhere when he closes his volume on *Luke* with words of life, light and beauty. **“The bells rang in heaven to greet the return of Jesus there, but he set the carillon of joy to ringing on earth in human hearts in all lands and for all time.” Amen!**

Are You Ready For Your Final Exam?