

SERMON NOTES
Luke 23-24
“Spoken from the Heart”

Intro:

- **Some Famous Last Words:**
- **James Rodges (murderer – when asked if he had a final request before a firing squad: “Yes, a bulletproof vest”**
- **Henry Ward Beecher: “Now comes the mystery”**
- **Crowfoot (American Indian): “What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow that runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.”**
- **Cesare Borgia: “I have taken care of everything in the course of my life – only not for death – and now I have to die completely unprepared.”**
- **Thomas Hobbes: “It’s my turn to take a leap into the darkness!”**
- **Sir Thomas Scott: “Up until this time, I thought that there was no God neither Hell. Now I know and feel that there are both, and I am delivered to perdition by the righteous judgment of the Almighty.”**
- **Niccolo Machiavelli: “I desire to go to Hell and not to Heaven. In Hell I shall enjoy the company of popes, kings and princes, while in Heaven are only beggars, monks and apostles.”**
- **Atheist philosopher David Hume: “I am in flames!”**
- **A Chinese Communist who had executed many Christians, speaking to a pastor: “I’ve seen many of you die. You Christians die differently. What is your secret?”**
- **John Newton (“Amazing Grace”): “I am still in the land of the dying; I shall soon be in the land of the living.”**
- **Stephen (first Christian martyr): “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”**

- **A man’s last words can reflect how they really see themselves, life, the world and what really matters in life and eternity**
- **Today we’re going to look at Jesus’ last words in the Gospel of Luke– from the Cross before his death – and then as risen Lord before ascending into heaven**
- **These last words will give us a glimpse into the heart of Jesus**

I. HIS HEART BLEEDS FORGIVENESS

Jesus was falsely accused, unfairly judged, and mistreated during a mockery of a trial
-then he was scourged or flogged

-the scourging was carried out by using a short whip with several single or braided leather thongs of various lengths

-incorporated in the thongs of leather were small iron balls, sharp pieces of sheep bones, and sharpened metal buttons designed to exact maximum physical damage - producing deep gashes in the flesh, along with deep bruising

Jesus was stripped naked, and his hands were tied to an upright post

-his back, buttocks, and legs were flogged by two soldiers

--As the Roman soldiers repeatedly struck his back with full force, the iron balls would cause deep contusions, and the leather thongs and sheep bones would cut into the skin

-Then, as the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh

Then the Roman soldiers, amused that this weakened man had claimed to be a king, began to mock him by placing a robe on his shoulders, a crown of thorns on his head, and a wooden scepter in his right hand

-next, they spat on Jesus and struck him on the head with his wooden staff

After the scourging and the mocking, the Roman soldiers put Jesus' clothes back on him and then led him and two thieves to be crucified

-Jesus was so weakened by the severe flogging that he could not carry his crossbar from the Praetorium to the site of the crucifixion 1/3 mile away

-Simon of Cyrene was summoned to carry Christ's cross, and the processional then made its way to Golgotha (Calvary), an established crucifixion site

Here, Jesus' clothes, except for a linen loincloth, again were removed, thereby reopening the scourging wounds

-Then he was nailed to the Cross -- driving the nails through the wrists would produce excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms

Each aspect of this slow form of execution was intended to produce intense agony, and the contributing causes of death were numerous

-the scourging served to weaken the condemned man and in some cases to produce shock

-when the victim was thrown to the ground on his back, his scourging wounds would become torn open again and contaminated with dirt

-furthermore, with each breath, the back wounds would be scraped against the rough wood of the cross

-as a result, blood loss would continue throughout the ordeal

Luke 23:32 - 34 (NIV) ³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”**

- *What is the worst sin that you have ever committed against God?*
- *What did you say or do that would have been the most hurtful or offensive to God?*
- *What have you done to hurt Jesus – to disappoint him – to disobey him – to cause harm to his name?*
- *What happens when we wound Jesus?*
- ***His heart bleeds forgiveness – “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”***
- *Herein we learn from Jesus a key to forgiving others their sins against us: often, they don't know what they are doing*
- *Yes, there are some cruel and malicious and evil people in the world*
- *But most of the time, when people hurt us – they don't know what they're doing*
- *Many of us have been wounded or neglected or abused or abandoned or treated harshly by a father or some other family member*
- *Most of the time – they themselves have been wounded or neglected or abused or abandoned or mistreated – **their ability to be a good parent has been severely damaged and limited by their own unhealed wounds***
- *And when they hurt us – they don't know what they are doing*
- *But what if you have sinned against God or another person – and you did not what you were doing*
- *Is there forgiveness available for willful and intentional sins and rebellion?*

Romans 8:33-34 ³³Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. ³⁴Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us.

Hebrews 7:25 ²⁵He is able to save completely all who come to God through him. Since he will live forever, he will always be there to remind God that he has paid for their sins with his blood.

- *The blood that Jesus shed on the Cross is powerful enough to cleanse you of even the worst sins that you have ever committed*
- **When you hurt or offend or wound Jesus – His heart bleeds forgiveness**

II. HIS HEART EXTENDS GRACE & HOPE TO SINNERS

Luke 23:39-43 ³⁹One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”

⁴⁰But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you are dying? ⁴¹We deserve to die for our evil deeds, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” ⁴²Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”

⁴³And Jesus replied, **“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

- *The two criminals – thieves – next to Jesus represent all of humanity*
- **We are all sinners – none is righteous – we all deserve to die for our sinful deeds – we all deserve to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven**
- *Yet one of the two thieves – that very day – would enter the gates of Paradise that had been shut since the day Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden*
- **And the other thief – would die in his sins and be lost forever**
- **What made the difference?**
- **Was one thief more righteous or more wicked than the other? Was one more religious or more moral than the other? NO**
- *One thief rejected Jesus and mocked him as a false Messiah powerless to save*
- **The other thief believed that the man bleeding and bruised next to him was not just another sinner – but rather was the King of glory who had the power to open the gates of Paradise – an amazing confession of faith**
- **And that is what makes the difference for all of us**
- **Spending eternity in heaven or hell is not determined by who has sinned more or less – we all have sinned enough to disqualify ourselves from heaven**
- **Our only hope for heaven is through the Cross of Jesus Christ which opens the Gates of Paradise**
- *Those who turn to Jesus in repentance and faith will enter the kingdom of heaven by way of His death and resurrection*
- **Those who reject Jesus Christ will die in their sins and be separated from God forever**

- *Two thieves were hung on crosses – similar crimes – facing death and eternity without hope of salvation or eternal life*
- *Like Thomas Hobbes – about to take a leap into eternal darkness – like Sir Thomas Scott – about to be delivered to perdition by the righteous judgment of God Almighty*
- **But then Jesus extended grace and hope to the thief who put his hope in Jesus**
- *Far from being powerless to save – Jesus was in the process of saving the repentant thief – and us – by his death*

Luke 23:44 - 45 (NIV) ⁴⁴It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

- *Jesus was mocked on the Cross for not being able to save himself*
- *The thief who insulted Jesus said: Save yourself and us!*
- **The thief and the other mockers around the cross did not understand that by dying – by not saving himself – Jesus was at that moment saving others**
- *The heavens turned dark and the curtain of the temple was torn in two – from top to bottom – by the hand of God*
- **That curtain blocked access to the Holy of Holies where the Presence of God dwelt between the cherubim above the ark of the covenant**
- *But the death of Jesus opened the Gates of Paradise and the way into the Holy Presence of God*

Hebrews 10:19-20 ¹⁹And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰This is the new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us through the sacred curtain, by means of his death for us.

- *The death of Jesus is the payment for the debt of our sin*
- **Jesus offered himself to be punished in our place**
- *Jesus endured the judgment of God against our sin*
- **Jesus sacrificed his life to put an end to all the animal sacrifices of the OT**
- *At the Cross of Christ – reconciliation between God and sinners takes place*
- **God accepts sinners as righteous in His sight because of Jesus' death for our sins**
- **Eternal life springs out of Jesus' death**

- *We embrace the grace and hope and salvation and eternal life offered at the Cross by renouncing our own good works or religious efforts or moral goodness as the basis of our salvation – and instead we trust wholly and exclusively in Jesus and in his finished work on the Cross*
- **And then – having received that grace – we extend it to others**
- *Grace is not just our ticket to heaven – it is the basis for our ongoing relationships with God // with one another in the body of Christ // and with sinners and outcasts in the world*
- One of the greatest hindrances to growth in Christ-likeness is forgetting our desperate need of the mercy and grace of God extended to us at the Cross
- *We start to distance ourselves from people like the thief on the Cross – thinking that we are innately more righteous than they – forgetting that Christ and Christ alone is our righteousness*
- **Communion reminds us that we never outgrow our need of the mercy and grace of the Cross of Jesus Christ**
- *Communion reminds us that once we were all just like the repentant thief hanging next to Jesus*
- Communion reminds us that the heart of Jesus is always extended to sinners
- **Growing in Christ-likeness means reflecting the heart of Jesus in our attitudes and speech and actions and relationships**
- *The main difference between Jesus and the religious Pharisees of his day is that Jesus was a Friend of Sinners and Outcasts who came to seek and to save the lost – whereas the Pharisees looked down their self-righteous noses on sinners and outcasts and tried to separate themselves from them as far as possible*
- **That is still the primary difference between Christ-followers and religious Pharisees today**
- *Christ-followers express the heart of Jesus for sinners and outcasts whereas religious Pharisees live separated lives unto themselves in their holy huddles while looking down on the very people Jesus died for*

III. HIS HEART IS EVER GOD-DIRECTED AND GOD-RELIANT

- *What were Jesus' dying words?*

Luke 23:46 (NIV) ⁴⁶Jesus called out with a loud voice, **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”** When he had said this, he breathed his last.

- *Jesus wasn't dying as God – he was dying as a man – and as a man, he died as he had lived – his heart and mind focused on his Father in heaven*
- **As a man, he showed us how to live – and as a man, he showed us how to die**
- *He lived and he died fully and completely trusting in his Father*

1 Peter 2:23 (NIV) ²³When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

- *Jesus lived a God-directed and God-reliant life – and in his moment of greatest trial and suffering – he entrusted himself and his spirit and his name and his reputation and his destiny into God's hands*
- **Jesus didn't take matters into his own hands // He didn't defend himself at his trial // He didn't protest all the injustices he was suffering // He didn't concern himself with vindicating his own name and reputation // He didn't hold grudges against those who had misjudged and mistreated him // He didn't go around demanding his own rights**
- *Instead, he entrusted himself to Him who judges justly*
- **The vindication of His righteousness would come – but not until after his death**
- *The resurrection was his vindication*
- **We cannot become like Jesus Christ just by trying hard to imitate him or follow his example**
- **Jesus was the man he was because he lived a God-directed and God-reliant life – every moment of every day**
- **We think the key to his life and ministry was his supernatural power as the Son of God**
- *What did Jesus say was the key to his life and ministry?*

John 5:19 (NIV) ¹⁹Jesus gave them this answer: **“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”**

- *The Son can do nothing by Himself*
- **Jesus was who he was and he did what he did because he lived a life of abiding in his Father and His love moment by moment**

- *That is why he taught us:*

John 15:4-5 **Take care to live in me, and let me live in you. For a branch can't produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you be fruitful apart from me.**
⁵**“Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit. For apart from me you can't do a thing.**

- *We don't become like Jesus by trying hard to imitate him*
- *We become like Jesus by living and abiding in him – by living a God-reliant and Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered life*

IV. HIS HEART SEEKS THE SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF HIS FOLLOWERS

The disciples were so sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah

*-but apparently they were wrong / perhaps he was just a prophet after all – if that – after all – **Jesus is dead and Jewish Messiahs don't die on Roman crosses***

As two disciples discussed these things while walking along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a stranger approached

-they were so deep in their conversation and self-pity that they did not hear the footsteps from behind

*-the stranger walked beside them, observing their earnest conversation, and after listening for a while, he interrupted: **What are you discussing together as you walk along?***

*-Long faces with puzzled expressions turned toward the stranger: **Where had he been the past few days? Why, he must be the only visitor to Jerusalem who hadn't heard of the events of that week!***

*-Not intimidated, the stranger asked: **What events?***

Then the 2 disciples spilled it all - the whole story along with their hopes and disappointments

-the stranger listened and then gently chided them for being so slow to understand that these events which seemed so final were not the last word

Luke 24:25-27 ²⁵Then Jesus said to them, **“You are such foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶Wasn't it clearly predicted by the prophets that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his time of glory?”** ²⁷Then Jesus quoted passages from the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining what all the Scriptures said about himself.

- *Jesus was committed to the spiritual growth of his followers*

- Sometimes that meant a gentle rebuke
- *His followers knew the Scriptures – Jesus Himself had told them before his death that he would be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and then on the third day be raised again*
- Soon, the risen Jesus would be leaving the disciples to return to the Father in heaven
- *They would need to remember his teachings and live by the promises of God's Word*
- They would need to explain to others how Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies about the Messiah and his suffering and glory
- *Jesus was holding them accountable here for their slowness in understanding and believing what the Scriptures said about him*

- Growing in Christ-likeness will mean committing ourselves to helping one another grow in our understanding of, faith in, and obedience to the Word of God
- *Sometimes that will take place by way of teaching // sometimes by encouraging one another // and sometimes by correcting and rebuking one another when our thoughts or attitudes or beliefs or words or behaviors get out of alignment with the words and heart of Jesus*

- *Having chided them, Jesus then patiently taught them*

He led them in a Bible study / starting with Genesis 3:15 and continuing through Deuteronomy 18:15 and Psalms 22 & 110 and Isaiah 7:14 & 9:6 & Isaiah 53 and into Daniel 7:13-14 and Micah 5:2 all the way to Malachi 3:1

-just a few of the OT prophecies concerning the Messiah

-and Jesus explained particularly from passages such as Isaiah 53 that it was God's plan for the Messiah first to suffer and die and then to be resurrected and ascend to glory

In the midst of their self-pity and depression, the disciples did not recognize the presence of Jesus even after having a Bible study with them

-Later, they would say: *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

-But at the time, they were kept from recognizing him

As they approached the village of Emmaus, Jesus acted as if he were going to continue walking farther down the road

-but the two disciples strongly urged him to stay with them, presumably in their home (Cleopas & his wife?)

-and he did

And it was at that point that Jesus revealed himself to them
-though he was a guest, he played the role of the host at the supper table
 -Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them
-it was then that the two disciples' eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus
-they recognized him in the breaking of the bread

And then, later that evening, Jesus appeared to 10 of his disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem

Luke 24:36-43 ³⁶And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. He said, **“Peace be with you.”** ³⁷But the whole group was terribly frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost! ³⁸**“Why are you frightened?”** he asked. **“Why do you doubt who I am? ³⁹Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do!”** ⁴⁰As he spoke, he held out his hands for them to see, and he showed them his feet. ⁴¹Still they stood there doubting, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, **“Do you have anything here to eat?”** ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he ate it as they watched.

- *There is so much mystery to the resurrection of Jesus that we will never understand this side of heaven*
- The disciples were skeptical when they first heard the reports of the women that Jesus was alive from the dead
- *Jesus did not expect his disciples to give their lives for him on the basis of blind faith*
- He gave them enough tangible evidence to make their faith certain
- *He appeared to them physically in bodily form – not the same mortal body as before – but a real body – a resurrected body – that still had the nailprints in his hands and feet*
- To prove that he was not merely a ghost or spirit or vision or hallucination – Jesus even ate some fish as they watched
- *Part of Jesus’ commitment to the spiritual growth of his disciples was to give them sufficient evidence to believe with firm conviction that he was alive from the dead*
- Jesus is no longer walking the earth in a physical body
- *But he has left us with convincing, reasonable, and sufficient evidence to make belief in his resurrection more reasonable than unbelief*
- The empty tomb // the empty graveclothes in the tomb // the numerous resurrection appearances at various times and places to various people //

the eyewitness testimonies of the NT writers // the changed lives of the disciples and the apostle Paul // the change of the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday // the willingness of the eyewitnesses to die as martyrs rather than recant their belief in Jesus and his resurrection

- *God wants you to love Him with all your mind as well as with all your heart and soul – and He has provided us with sufficient evidence to make faith in Jesus and his resurrection a reasonable and intelligent faith*

V. HIS HEART IS DEVOTED TO THE SCRIPTURES

Luke 24:44 - 47 (NIV) ⁴⁴He said to them, **“This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”** ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, **“This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

- Jesus is the only man who ever lived who could truthfully say: *“It’s all about me”*
- **The truth is: The Bible – both Old and New Testaments – is all about Jesus**
- Jesus wanted his disciples to have a faith and a ministry that were well-grounded in the Scriptures
- *And Jesus wanted their faith the their ministry and their lives to be Christ-centered*
- **Christianity must never be reduced to set of moral principles or religious rituals or church activities or family values or political causes**
- ***Christianity is all about Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection***
- **If we are to be faithful to Jesus Christ, then our church must always be rooted and grounded in biblical truth and must always be Christ-centered**
- *The scriptures testify to Jesus Christ*
- **Jesus said: *The Scriptures are all about me***
- **Therefore, when we teach the Bible to our children and youth – or when we are having a Bible study with spiritual seekers – we need to keep the focus on Jesus Christ – whether we are teaching from the OT or NT**

VI. HIS HEART IS PASSIONATE ABOUT SPREADING THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS

Luke 24:46-49 ⁴⁶And he said, **“Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah must suffer and die and rise again from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷With my authority, take this message of repentance to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘there is forgiveness of sins for all who turn to me.’ ⁴⁸You are witnesses of all these things. ⁴⁹“And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”**

- *The church of Jesus Christ is not a holy huddle or religious club existing for the benefit of its dues-paying members*
- At least – not the church of whom Jesus Christ is the Head – not the church that reflects the heart of Jesus Christ for lost sinners and for those who have yet to hear His name
- You cannot become a fully devoted follower of Jesus without joining Him in the work about which he was most passionate – namely – seeking and saving the lost
- *It takes more than worship and Christian fellowship and Bible study and church activities to make a disciple of Jesus Christ*
- *Discipleship cannot be separated from evangelism and outreach*
- *There is no such thing as an inwardly-focused fully devoted Christ-follower*
- *You can be an inwardly-focused Pharisee – but you cannot be an inwardly-focused Christ-follower because from beginning to end Jesus was all about evangelism and reaching lost sinners*

Matthew 4:19 (NIV) ¹⁹**“Come, follow me,”** Jesus said, **“and I will make you fishers of men.”**

Acts 1:8 (NIV) ⁸**But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Passionate people = externally-focused