

Program Transcripts

January 2021



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY®

SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

JANUARY 3 – WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?

You have an appointment that you cannot avoid: one day you must face the Lord. How you treat the Lord today will determine how the Lord will deal with you in eternity. What are you doing with Jesus?

JANUARY 10 – SAVED OR LOST?

There is a big difference between being saved and being lost. There is a big difference between standing in the grace of God or being rejected by the Lord. Being right with the Lord is the most critical matter of all.

JANUARY 17 – WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Pontius Pilate asked the question, “What is truth?” In this lesson we’ll examine Pilate’s question, asking the question, “Where does one find the truth on spiritual and moral matters when our culture doesn’t believe in absolutes?”

JANUARY 24 – SAYINGS FROM THE CROSS 1

They say the last words a person speaks is important. The gospel accounts record seven last sayings of Jesus Christ. If His words are important to our souls and eternity, we should listen and pay close attention.

JANUARY 31 – SAYINGS FROM THE CROSS 2

In this lesson we continue listening to what the Lord Jesus said while he was dying upon the cross. We’ll hear His cry of agony and we’ll see how He finished His suffering for the sins of the world.

What Will You Do with Jesus?

You have an appointment that you cannot avoid: and one day you must face the Lord. We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We love the Lord and want to please Him, and the Scriptures teach us how. God is our Creator and the source of every good thing; God gave His Son upon the cross for our sins; God gives us an abundant life and eternal life; and the Lord Jesus is preparing a home for us in heaven. These things move us to love Him and to please Him in every respect.

Mack Lyon asked me to work with the Search ministry twelve years ago. I moved back to Oklahoma to be part of this evangelistic effort. These twelve years have been a different part of my ministry than my work with local churches, but I have treasured these years. This week celebrates another anniversary: I began working as a youth minister for the East Main Church of Christ in Shawnee, Oklahoma, fifty years ago in 1971. Dewayne Thomas was the minister and he helped me learn about ministry. Through the years with churches in Oklahoma, Mississippi, Texas, and Tennessee, I've made many new friends throughout America and in other countries.

Working these last twelve years at In SEARCH of the Lord's Way has been exciting and challenging. I've learned to pray and to depend upon God for strength. I've seen God open doors of opportunity for preaching the word far beyond anything I imagined. I am thankful to my coworkers, our volunteers, our viewers, and our supporters of SEARCH for all their encouragement and prayers. God truly is the giver of every good thing, and the people who love this ministry are the salt of the earth. I ask that you please keep praying that God will continue to bless us for many more years.

Our reading today comes from Acts 17:30-34. Paul is in Athens and he's giving the philosophers a reason to believe in God, and a reason to follow Jesus.

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this." So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Yes, some will sneer, but some will believe. Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that You do give us proof by raising Jesus from the dead, to believe in Him. We're thankful Father for all the blessings of life, and we're thankful for Your Word. Help us to be faithful in believing in You, and faithful in our service to You. In Jesus name, Amen."

No event in history compares with the events of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and the establishment of the church. This series of events describes human nature and reveals how they perceived and treated Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus knew that He would suffer at the hands of His enemies. Matthew 20:17-19 says, "As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.'" Both Judas Iscariot and Simon Peter heard this prophecy.

The Chief Priests hated Jesus and they feared that they would lose their status as leaders of the Jewish people. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead they began thinking seriously of finding a

way to kill Him. When Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the Temple, things got even more serious. Mark 11:15-18 says, “Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, ‘Is it not written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?” But you have made it a robbers' den.’” (Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 56:7, and Jeremiah 7:11.) The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and they began seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching. They wanted to kill Him and began looking for a way.

Judas Iscariot had been a thief, helping himself to what was in their moneybag. His desire for money became a habit. When he learned the chief priests were seeking an opportunity to capture Jesus privately he took them up on the offer. Luke 22:3-6 says, “And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and the officers how he might betray Him to them. They were glad and agreed to give him money. So he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them, and it would be apart from the crowd.” Judas apparently loved that measly thirty pieces of silver more than he loved the Lord Jesus.

Though Jesus washed the feet of Judas, and though Judas participated in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, he still betrayed Jesus and led the crowds to the Garden of Gethsemane. When Judas came into the garden, Jesus called him “friend” (Matthew 26:50); but Judas was no friend. He betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

Then there was Simon Peter who disappointed Jesus by denying him three times. Peter boasted in Matthew 26:33-35, “‘Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.’ Peter said to him, ‘Even if I must die with you, I’ll never deny you!’ And all the disciples said the same.”

The words of Jesus proved true. Peter, falling to fear and temptation, did indeed deny being with the Lord three separate times. According to Mark 14:71, he invoked a curse on himself and swore that he did not know Jesus. Luke 22:61 mentions that after his third denial the Lord Jesus himself turned and looked at Peter. Peter remembered what the Lord had said, and he went out and he wept bitterly.

Pontius Pilate was the appointed procurator or governor of the Judean province. He was known as an able administrator who would not allow riotous behavior among the Jews; but he was obstinate and inflexible. Because Pilate treated the Jews mercilessly and took money from the Temple treasury to build aqueducts the Jews despised him. Because the Jewish Council couldn’t sentence Jesus to death on their own they had to get Pilate involved.

The Sanhedrin Council falsely condemned Jesus for blasphemy when Jesus admitted that He was the Christ, the Son of God; but Pilate would not put Jesus to death for a Jewish theological dispute. The charge they brought to Pilate was one of treason, since being the Messiah meant Jesus was a king. In John 18 Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you a king?” Jesus responded in John 18:36-37, “‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’ And then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king (that is, yes). For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’” Jesus is the king of a spiritual kingdom, not a worldly one.

Pilate repeatedly told the Jews that he found no guilt in Jesus, that Jesus had not done anything worthy of death. Since it was Pilate's custom to let a prisoner go free, and hoping that prisoner would be Jesus, he asked the crowd if they wanted Jesus to be released. Mark 15:11-14 says, "But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, 'Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' And they cried out again, 'Crucify him.' And Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him.'"

Pilate's wife had gotten involved. Matthew 27:19 says, "And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, 'Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.'" Pilate had married Claudia Procula, the granddaughter of Augustus Caesar and was very powerful. Pilate owed his position to his wife's connections. He was caught between his wife's warning and the Jewish crowd's insistence that Jesus be crucified.

When Pilate tried to free Jesus, the Jewish leaders told Pilate, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7-8). When Pilate heard this statement he was even more afraid. Matthew reveals what Pilate did. "So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and he washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I'm innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' And all the people answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children' Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified" (Matthew 27:24-26)

When Pilate felt trapped he compromised. He washed his hands of the situation and declared himself free from "this man's blood." Pilate tried to absolve himself of any responsibility for the condemnation of Jesus, but Pilate was lying to himself and to the crowd. It's common nature for people to try to justify their actions rather than admit they were doing something wrong. Pilate could wash his hands physically, but he couldn't avoid responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ. People today try to justify their sins through a lot of false reasoning, but according to 2 Timothy 4:8, Jesus is "the righteous judge." He will judge us fairly according to what we've done good or bad. You may justify yourself, but that doesn't mean the Lord Jesus will justify you.

Matthew 27:27-31 says, "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed on his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him."

For those who love Jesus Christ, we hardly understand how anyone's heart could be so hardened that they would treat another human being the way they treated the innocent Jesus Christ. This is what they did with Jesus: the Council hated Him, wanted Him dead; Judas betrayed Him with a kiss; Peter denied Him three times; Pilate washed his hands of Jesus; and the soldiers mocked Him, spit on Him, beat Him, scourged Him, and crucified Him. That's how they treated the Lord of glory who suffered and died to set us free from sin and to bring us to God.

Jesus never fought back, never called twelve legions of angels to protect Him. He willingly suffered for our sins. Isaiah prophesied of Jesus: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—

to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:4-6). The grace of the Lord Jesus so marvelously blesses us, we wonder how could we ignore Him or sin against Him.

What are you doing with Jesus? You’re doing something with Him. You may doubt that He ever existed. You may think He was just a good teacher. You may deny He’s the Son of God, but denying Him doesn’t change the facts. You may disagree with Him and leave Him, but what Jesus said then remains true. You may hate Him, but He doesn’t hate you. You may be ignoring Him, but He is calling for you. You may be making fun of those who believe in Him. You may betray Him, but He won’t betray you. You may wish you could wash your hands and be free of Him, but He isn’t going away. You may think assembling with the Lord and His people to worship isn’t important, but Jesus communes with His people in the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord Jesus told the lukewarm Laodiceans, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. And if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:19-20). The Lord wants to be close to you, to bless you, and to prepare a place for you in heaven. Jesus loved you enough to suffer on the cross for you. I pray that you might have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Whatever mistakes you made in the past doesn’t have to determine what you will do with Jesus today or in the future. If you recognize His love for you, won’t you love Him with all your heart? Let’s pray. “Father, we’re thankful that You have loved us so much that you gave Your Son for us, to die for our sins so that we might live with You. Help us to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and to do Your will. In Jesus' name, we pray Amen.”

You may ignore the Lord now, but there’s a day coming when you can’t avoid Him, and you won’t be able to avoid him in the life to come. Philippians 2:9-11 says, “God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.” If you fail to bow the knee in this life, you will bow it in the life to come.

You’ll also face Christ in judgment: Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” On that day, you’ll either hear the Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master”; or you’ll hear, “I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matthew 25:21-22). What you now do with Jesus will determine what Jesus will then do with you.

You must in this life come to Him with faith and love in your hearts. You must repent of your sins and determine to live righteously. You must confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and be baptized into Christ. When you’re baptized into Christ, your sins are washed away (Acts 22:16) and you become a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Father will then make you His child, and the Lord will add you to His church. What a blessing! Why not get right today!

Saved or Lost?

There is a big difference between being saved and being lost. Today, we're exploring the difference between being right with God and not being right with God. The Scriptures give us the words of Jesus, and these are words of eternal life. That's why we turn to Scripture! We want to live eternally with our Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayer is that you too will have eternal life with the Father. You can always trust the Scripture to teach the truth that leads to eternal life.

The Lord Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Most people are surprised at this statement from the Lord. They imagine that most people are saved and only the worst people will be lost. But Jesus didn't say that; He said many travel the broad way that leads to destruction, while few take the narrow road that leads to life. Be one of the few!

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Many are embracing a false assurance that everything is spiritually all right, when, in fact, unresolved sin is endangering their souls. Others are blindly following the crowd, never examining the Scriptures to see if what they believe is true. They listen to the world and never consider what God says. They don't realize that they're risking their souls. When it comes to our souls, everything we treasure is at stake. Whether we serve God is not a trivial matter.

Our reading today comes from Paul's letter to Titus 2:11-14. It tells him about what grace can do for us.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and Godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possessions, zealous for good works.

The topic of sin is sensitive for many people. People don't want to think of themselves as sinners, so people tend to ignore the word. A Harris poll several years ago suggested that 13 percent of Americans think there's no such thing as sin. Many others think the whole concept of sin is obsolete and that God won't condemn anybody. The Scriptures, however, are clear. We have all sinned, everyone of us. Romans 3:10 says, "as it is written, 'there is none righteous, not even one.'" Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Solomon observed, "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). First John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we're deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Verse 10 continues, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." Considering that we all have sinned against God, we may say with the psalmist, "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3).

When we sin, it affects our souls and our relationship with the Lord. What does sin do to us? First, sin deceives us. Hebrews 3:12 speaks of how people are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. People grow to love sin, because it promises them pleasure; but sin's pleasure ends up corrupting and enslaving those who practice it. Second, the Lord Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that everyone

who commits sin is the slave of sin” (John 8:34) We think we’re in control, but sin will take control of us and make us do things that bring shame and regret.

Ultimately, sin will cause us spiritual death. James 1:13-15 says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I’m being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he’s carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” Romans 6:23 says, “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Christ brings us eternal life, but sin brings nothing but spiritual death and eternal separation from God.

Paul describes those who are lost in sin in Ephesians 2:1-3, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” When people follow the devil and live in disobedience they are destined to face the wrath of God. He gets even more specific in verse 12, when he said. “remember that you (that is, before you became a Christian) were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” No hope and without God! That’s what it means to be lost.

Thankfully, this is not the whole story. No one has to remain lost. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we can have forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. Ephesians 2:4-7 says, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you’ve been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.” God has graciously given us Jesus Christ that we might find forgiveness and hope for eternity. The grace of God is truly amazing; but it’s only amazing when we realize the consequences of sin and our need to be saved. When we finally realize the bitterness of sin and being lost we’ll begin to see the beauty and the love found in salvation and grace.

Titus 2:11-14 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and Godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” God doesn’t leave us where He found us. His grace not only saves us and redeems us; it changes our hearts and our lives. We become new people, born again.

Titus 3:3-7 tells what happens. “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we’ve done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Forgiveness takes place when we’re washed and regenerated (that is, born again) in baptism. God’s grace justifies us and makes us heirs of eternal life.

Forgiveness permits us to be reconciled to God. Second Corinthians 5:19 describes forgiveness as God “not counting their trespasses against” us. When we’re forgiven, we can come to God. First Peter 3:18 says, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.” When we come to God, God sees us differently than when we were in the world.

First Peter 2:9-10 describes those who have come to God, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of GOD; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” Ephesians 2:19 says, “So then you’re no longer strangers and aliens, but you’re fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household (God’s family).”

The Lord Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting (or eternal) life” (John 3:16). Every word the Lord said here is true, but the Lord says more than what is found in just one verse, or this verse. One verse may tell you something true but not the whole truth. Some take this verse as the whole gospel and ignore other verses that are just as binding, and just as inspired and authoritative. They argue one is saved by faith alone and nothing else is necessary, some do.

The Lord Jesus, however, also said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). We must believe this verse is also true. Unless one is baptized, born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Saying we must believe in Jesus is surely true, but we can’t ignore the necessity of being born again of water and the Spirit. Christianity isn’t a smorgasbord where we can pick which verses we like and leave the rest alone. Jesus is Lord every time He speaks. Baptism into Christ is a necessary act of faith. Scripture reveals that God desires penitent and baptized believers, not simply people who say they believe. Galatians 3:26-27 says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

John 3:16 should also be understood with John 3:35-36, which says, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” If you believe the Lord but are unwilling to obey Him you won’t have eternal life. Saying you believe isn’t sufficient, you must obey the Lord and practice your faith. Many people have faith, but they’re not willing to practice it.

John 12:42-43 describes such people. “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” Some today hold so strongly to their human traditions and positions in the community that they’re unwilling to confess and obey the Lord.

The Scriptures teach that people who come to Christ can fall away and leave the Lord. Hebrews 3:12-14 says, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it’s still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.” It’s not enough simply to become a Christian; we must hold fast our faith until the end. Those who begin walking the narrow road must remain on that road. To forsake the Lord and the church by turning back to the world will cost you your soul.

Second Peter 2:20-21 says, “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.” Many Christians have wandered away from the faith; they no longer believe in Jesus Christ. And others have allowed the worries, riches, and pleasures of this life to choke God out of their hearts and lives.

Continuing in willful sin can cost a wayward Christian his soul. Some Christians turn from the Lord and love sin so much that they’ll not give it up. The writer of the book of Hebrews described some early Christians as drifting away from the truth, neglectful of their salvation, dull of hearing, immature, and sluggish. Some have abandoned assembling with other Christians at church. Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.” The sacrifice of Jesus Christ that once saved them would no longer be available to them. God didn’t abandon them; they abandoned God. What about you? Have you become a Christian? Have you abandoned your faith? Are you saved or are you lost?

Let’s pray. “O Father, we pray that we’ll have hearts that are set upon serving You, and loving You, and staying faithful. And Father, help us to do Your will always. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.”

Would you rather be saved or be lost? Some have made this earth their focus, but there’s something more valuable than the whole world. The Lord Jesus said, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done” (Matthew 16:25-27). Wouldn’t you rather live with God in heaven than without Him? Heaven is a place of joy and love and peace. It’s a place without sorrow or sin.

First Timothy 2:3-4 says, “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of our God, our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” You can be saved if you’ll place your faith in Jesus, if you’ll confess your faith that He is the Lord, that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, and if you repent of your sins, and if you’ll be baptized (that is, immersed in water) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, just as Acts 2:38 teaches. God’s love and His grace are abundant, but we must not take grace for granted.

We must hear and obey the Lord. We must deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily. Sadly, many choose the broad way that leads to destruction. Won’t you take the narrow road that leads to life? Won’t you hear God’s word, believe it, and follow the Lord all your days? Only the truth can set you free.

What Is Truth?

Pontius Pilate asked the question, “What is truth?” Today, we’re going to consider Pilate’s question, and see what the Scriptures say about truth. Proverbs 23:23 says, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.” It costs to know the truth. We have to search for it and struggle to learn it; but once we know the truth, we must never let it go. Without the truth, we can’t have confidence in anything; we’re left in darkness without any answers; but with the truth, we can have confidence and hope.

People in our culture often say phrases like “your truth” and “my truth.” They think, “what’s true for you is true for you, but it’s not necessarily true for me.” They’ve stopped believing in absolute truth, but they think that all truth is relative. They believe there’s no settled truth in religion but believe that all ideas are equally true and valid, even if they contradict one another. They often define what is true by what we think or feel; they believe people can manufacture their own truth. They assume the truth is subjective rather than objective, and they determine the truth by their opinions. People use these kinds of ideas to dismiss any view that they don’t like or to keep them from facing up to what God has to say about some belief, some practice, or some moral view that they hold.

Do truth and morality exist, or is everything simply someone’s opinion? Can we know the truth? If we’re left only with opinions, we truly are in the dark. An opinion is merely a guess in the absence of evidence. If the inspired Word of God is true, and we have evidence it is, then we cannot ignore it. Truth arises out of facts. And the resurrection of Jesus declares that He is truly the Son of God. So let’s listen to Him.

Our reading today is from The Gospel According to John 18:33-38. Here Jesus is having a conversation with Pilate, just before He is sentenced to die.

Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?” Pilate answered, “I’m not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.” Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” And Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, “I find no guilt in Him.”

Yes, Jesus was certainly innocent, and Jesus teaches us the truth.

Pilate asked the question, “What is truth?” Truth refers to the actual state of matters and verifiable facts. Truth also refers to propositions and principles that describe the way things really are! When you believe a true statement, you can rely on it. When you believe a false statement, you’ll be misled and perhaps suffer false hope. When you have no basis for determining what is true and what is false, you become confused and easily fooled.

We serve a holy and righteous God. Titus 1:2 speaks of the God “who cannot lie” or “who never lies.” He tells the truth when He speaks. In a prayer to the Father, David said in Psalm 86:15, “But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.” Psalm 119:142 says, “Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law is truth.” Verse 160 repeats the concept: “The sum of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.”

The Lord today speaks to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. We can trust Jesus Christ to tell us the truth. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The same Jesus who was full of grace was also full of truth! You can trust Him! If you follow Jesus Christ, you’ll never be led astray.

The apostle Paul was amazed that Christians could desert Jesus for a different gospel. He made it clear: “I’m amazed that you’re so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we’ve said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!” (Galatians 1:6-9). A false doctrine disturbs the unity of the church. A person who teaches a different gospel, no matter who he or she is, will be accursed.

Jesus knew people and knew how easily people could be deceived by traditions and popular ideas that appealed to their desires. Jesus said, “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought (or worked) in God” (John 3:19-21). The teaching of the Lord Jesus provides for us a basis to distinguish truth from error and right from wrong.

The truth matters, because it distinguishes the real disciples of Jesus from those who merely think they are His disciples. The Lord Jesus said to those Jews who had believed in Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32). When people get away from the words of Jesus, they cease to be true disciples. Some Christians are so concerned about what people think and say, they lose sight of what the Lord has said. They believe the popular lie rather than listen to the eternal truth.

Jesus had to deal with some Jews who were deceived by their human traditions and would not listen to Him. He explains, “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It’s because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he who is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you don’t believe Me” (John 8:43-45). It was a real surprise to Jesus that they would hold to a lie rather than the truth.

Jesus was not shy about asserting His authority. He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; and no one (no one) comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14: 6). There is only one way to heaven, and that way is through Jesus Christ. After His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). All authority means He has more authority than anyone else does. He has more authority than any human religious leader, more authority than any human creed, and more authority than any human council does. He is the ultimate and supreme authority, and no one, no one, no one, can overrule Him. The Lord said, “He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48).

God’s Word spoken through Jesus cannot be changed or rewritten to suit our culture. Psalm 119:89 says, “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.” The Lord Jesus Himself said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Matthew 24:3). Do you remember the words of Jesus? How He told Pilate, “For this I have been born, and for this I’ve come into the world, to

testify to the truth. And everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37). If you want a basis to determine what is spiritually true and what is false, listen to Jesus Christ. If you wish to know what morals matter, listen to Jesus. Everyone who is of the truth will hear His voice, that is the voice of Jesus Christ. Don’t miss His voice. Don’t presume that you can challenge His authority and still please Him.

Preachers can say whatever they please about morals or what to do to be saved, but they can’t change the words that Jesus spoke. Councils and conferences can write papers and declare their rules on a host of topics, but the Lord alone will have the final say on the last day. Jesus is the one and only Lord, and He has already spoken the truth on all things spiritual and moral. You can reject what the Lord says yeah, but your rejection will not keep you from being judged by His words! You may think you can judge the teaching of Christ, but in the end His teaching will judge you.

Some folks are not willing to pay the price to buy the truth. They listen to other people and accept whatever they say rather than searching the Scriptures for themselves. Some religious leaders want you to come to them for answers rather than going to the Bible, to God, for yourselves. Acts 17:11 speaks of the noble Bereans: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures (the Bible) daily to see whether these things were so.” Don’t simply listen to what some preacher’s opinions are, examine the Scriptures to see whether he is speaking the truth.

When you study the Scriptures, study all that they say about any topic. Many hang onto one verse and what that verse says and fail to pay attention to the rest of the Scriptures that speak about that topic. Paul warned, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). We’re “saved by grace through faith” (Ephesians 2:8), but Christ is the source of eternal salvation “to all those who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). We shouldn’t unfairly judge others (Matthew 7:1), but we should judge with righteous judgment (John 7:24). We must learn to separate the old covenant from the new covenant, realizing that we’re not under the Law of Moses but serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we study the Bible we need to know who is speaking and to whom he’s speaking. The Bible is actually a library of sixty-six books. We need to know the social and historical background of each book. Some parts of Scripture are narratives, some are laws, some are poetry, and some are prophecy. It’s helpful to know about each kind of literature. We need to know the occasion for each writing, and what the author intended to communicate to his readers.

Properly understanding Scripture means hearing what the author is saying rather than trying to read into the text of Scripture something that was never there. It’s important to know the context, the surrounding material, of each passage. Some select a passage out of its context and then teach things that mislead. Sometimes people speak of baptism as a sprinkling of water, but the word translated as baptism refers to an immersion in water. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9); and John baptized at Aenon, because there was much water there (John 3:23). When Philip baptized the Eunuch in Acts 8, they went down into the water and came up out of the water. Paul speaks of baptism in Romans 6 and Colossians 2 as being “buried with Christ.” This is the biblical concept, burial with Christ, baptism and immersion. Hundreds of years later people started sprinkling and calling it baptism. They did this for centuries, and people were fooled into thinking that their sprinkling was a baptism; but it was not an immersion, and it was not what He wanted them to do. Rather, it was an innovation, something new and different from what God said.

When a religious leader makes a compromising statement about morals or teaches some doctrine that disagrees with the truth found in Scripture, you need to examine fully what the Scriptures actually

say. One leader recently said you can go to heaven even if you don't believe in God; but the Scriptures say, "And without faith it's impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Another leader said, you don't have to believe Jesus is the Son of God; but the Lord Jesus, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24). Truth matters! You can't believe anything that you please and remain right with God.

The Lord Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. And many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:21-23). Here were religious leaders who called Jesus, "Lord, Lord" but did not teach the will of God. They were lawless, they were involved in religious efforts but never were accepted by the Lord. They were "lawless," and taught their own doctrines, and practiced their own ways. They didn't listen to the Lord; they failed to practice the truth.

Hebrews 2:1-3 says, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Are you listening to the Lord? Do you know and love the truth?

The Lord Jesus said to the apostles, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" (John 16:12-13). The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to give us God's Word in the New Testament. We can trust the New Testament is true because we have the Lord's promise.

We need the Word of God. The Lord Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). If the Word of God is necessary for life, shouldn't we listen and obey? The Lord Jesus said, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Jesus will not be your Savior, unless He is also your Lord. Will you do what He says?

To be a Christian is more than merely saying that you believe. It is a commitment to love the Lord with all your heart and all your soul. Yes, you must believe He is the Christ, the Son of God and be willing to confess Him before others. It's a commitment to deny yourself, and to take up your cross daily, and to follow the Lord. You must be willing to turn from your sins and live for the Lord. You must also be willing to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). When you're baptized, the Lord washes away your sins, makes you His child, and adds you to His church. Won't you obey Him today?

We ask that you do focus your heart on God, and do it today by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So, as we always say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.

Sayings from the Cross 1

They say the last words a person speaks are important. Today, we're focusing on the words of Jesus Christ while He was on the cross. God declared about the Lord Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5). We need to listen to Him if we want to know God's will. If we wish to please, to respect, and to obey Him, we first must hear and pay attention to what He says. Loving the Lord means carefully listening to Him. That's why His words mean so much to us.

Someone has remarked that what people say at the close of their lives reveals their minds, their hearts, and their character. We're going to look at the words Jesus spoke, and whenever His burdens, His agony, and His sacrifice were at the most visible and difficult point. We're focusing on His words as He was being crucified and hanging upon the cross. While Jesus lingered there, just being able to breathe would have been exceptionally difficult. He suffered more severely than we can imagine. Just to speak would have required a lot of effort. If Jesus worked that hard to speak, what He had to say must be important! How important are the words of Jesus to you?

Hearing what Jesus has to say is important. He speaks the words of eternal life. His words come from the Father, and they teach us of the Father's love and the Father's will for our lives. Jesus, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). If the words of Christ gave us life itself, shouldn't we pay close attention? Are you listening to Jesus?

Our reading today comes from Isaiah 53:4-6. This is a marvelous Messianic prophecy about what Jesus experienced while He was on the cross.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all, To fall on Him."

Yes, to fall upon Him, and He suffered for us. Let's pray. "Father we're thankful for the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us so much. And Father we're thankful that He was willing to bear our iniquities, so that we might be forgiven and have life eternal. Father help us to devote our hearts and our lives to You always. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."

Crucifixion was the most painful and cruel death of ancient times. It was designed to make the agony last as long as possible. As they were nailing Jesus to the cross we have His first saying. The Lord Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

We find it difficult to forgive when someone has intentionally and maliciously hurt us. It's easier to become angry and vengeful, but that's contrary to God's teaching on forgiveness. Someone hurts us, and some decide we can't forgive or forget. Of course, anger only hurts us and keeps the wound open. People tend to nurture a grudge, but Jesus didn't. That's why we need to listen to Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do." These familiar words reveal a stunning and an amazing grace. If we grasp the wonder of this first word from the cross, it will help us to forgive others.

Jesus could have prayed, "Father, punish them! Father, destroy them!" He could have called for legions of angels to deliver Him and strike down His enemies. We could pray, "Father, hurt them like they've hurt me!" First Peter 2:23 says about Jesus: "while being reviled, He didn't revile in return;

while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Our Lord prayed from a heart of love, “Father, forgive them.” What an example for us to follow!

Forgiveness and reconciliation are what the cross is all about. Forgiving others is much less difficult when we remember how much the Lord has forgiven us. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

The second time Jesus spoke takes a little time to examine the context. Luke 23:35-43 says, “And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.’ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!’ There was also an inscription above Him, ‘This is the king of the Jews.’

“And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, ‘Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’ But the other answered, and rebuking him said, ‘Do you not even fear God, since you’re under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we’re receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’ And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”

Jesus endured the sneering of the Jews and the mocking of the soldiers. One of the criminals also jeered at Christ to save Him, but the other criminal rebuked him, and he remarked that Jesus was innocent and asked Him to “remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” Jesus replied, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Jesus said they both would that very day be in Paradise. In Revelation 2:7 Jesus promises, “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.” Paradise refers to the place where righteous souls go when this life is over.

Many point to the salvation of this thief on the cross and think salvation today comes just like it did to that thief. This, however, is a special situation and ignores many relevant facts. The thief lived under the first covenant before the blood and death of Jesus ratified the new covenant, under which we live today. During His ministry on earth, Jesus could and did save people any way He desired; but we today find our salvation by hearing the message of the gospel. First Corinthians 1:21 says, “For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” Romans 1:16 says the “gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” The question is not what Jesus told the thief on the cross; the question is what will Jesus say to us about our salvation!

When people today hear and believe the gospel of Christ, they repent of their sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and they are baptized into Christ. The gospel is the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus said, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He (that is, the Son of God), you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). We are saved by faith but not by faith alone. The Lord Jesus also said, “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Paul told the Athenian philosophers, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31). It takes faith to repent, but someone who says he believes but will not repent cannot be saved.

With faith and repentance, the person who loves the Lord because of what Jesus did on the cross will want to confess his faith in Jesus Christ and be baptized into Christ. Before baptism, we’re outside

of Christ and His blessings; but when we're baptized into Christ, we put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). Romans 6:3 says, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Our baptism in water today takes us to the cross, to the death of Christ, and we are baptized into Christ.

Paul explains how baptism sets us free from sin and unites us with Christ. Romans 6:4-7 says, "Therefore we've been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we've become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin."

Baptism in water buries us with Christ and raises us up with Christ, so that we can walk in newness of life. The old self was crucified with Christ so that our sins could be done away with and we could be free from the guilt and the punishment of sin. When we are crucified with Christ, that's when the blood washes that sin away. In Baptism, the blood washes away sin because we're crucified with Christ. Peter tells us of another benefit: "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:2). When we're baptized, we are saved. Baptism is the time that we appeal or inquire to God for a good conscience; and when we are raised up with Christ to a new life and born again, we have that conscience that says that we're set free from that old life and have a new beginning. The Bible says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Because through baptism into Christ and into His death, God puts us in Christ, and He saves us, and makes us new creatures, and then we have a hope of entering Paradise when this physical life is over. Like Lazarus, who went to Abraham's bosom in Luke 16, faithful Christians have the promise of a blessing when this life is over.

Jesus promised the thief, "You will be with Me," and we are going to be with the Lord when we die. Some people ask, "Will we go to be with Jesus when we die?" The Scriptures answer this question, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). When our bodies die, our spirits go to be at home with the Lord.

Philippians 1:21-24 says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I don't know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart (that is, to die) and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." Paul believed that departing from this life and being "with Christ" to be far better than living in the flesh. He had confidence that when he died, he would be "with Christ." Let me ask you, do you have confidence?

Life is very uncertain; and we have no guarantees we'll live to a ripe old age. We may not have plenty of time to correct our lives to the saving of our souls. James 4:14 says, "You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You're just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." If you were to depart today, would you go to be with Christ? Would you hear the Lord say, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise"? If you're not sure about your relationship with the Lord and your salvation, oh take the necessary steps that God requires.

God's grace is open to every person who will lovingly and humbly come to Him in faith and willing to obey Him. Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a

contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” When you see how a sinful way of life will cause you to be lost, and you humbly repent of your sins and turn your heart toward the will of God, it can make a difference. The person who wants to be saved doesn’t argue with God. His heart is ready to listen to whatever the Lord asks of Him. He’s happy! He wants to obey the Lord.

He’s happy to deny himself, to take up his cross daily and follow the Lord. He’s happy to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. He wants his sins to be washed away, so like Saul of Tarsus he doesn’t wait but is baptized right then (Acts 22:16). The three thousand on the day of Pentecost were baptized that very day. The Eunuch saw water and was baptized right then (Acts 8:36-39). The Philippian jailer and his family were baptized in the middle of the night in Acts 16. The twelve disciples of John in Acts 19 were baptized into Christ immediately. Why did they act so urgently? They acted because they loved the Lord and wanted to be right with Him! Will you?

Living in the grace and favor of God, being saved from sin and its consequences, is the most necessary step in your life. You can possess the world; but if you don’t have the favor of God, you have no hope of eternal life with the Lord Jesus. A future without God is terrible. The way God has determined for you to have eternal life comes by His grace and through faith. You must believe in the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. The basis for this faith comes in the message of the gospel. Paul wrote, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). To be saved, you must believe in Jesus and in the gospel.

Having godly parents won’t save you, if you refuse to come to Christ. Belonging to a church won’t save you, if you live a worldly life. You must one day face the Lord Jesus, on your own. Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” The Jesus who died on the cross will come again to judge the world in righteousness. Are you prepared to meet God?

If you love the Lord and believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, repent of your sins. Give them up and start living for the Lord. Confess your faith, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And then God washes away sin when we’re baptized into Christ and He adds us to His church. So respond today.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there’s probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll be happy to help you find one. Well we’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.

Sayings from the Cross 2

Today, we're continuing to explore what Jesus said while He was on the cross. Jesus spoke, let's listen. Listening to the words of the Lord Jesus opens our hearts to God. Truly listening to a loved one or friend is one of the most loving things you can do. Listening to the Lord is not only a way to love Him but also necessary to our eternal life. Jesus has the words of eternal life; and we need to hear and believe what He says, if we plan to have eternal life, let's listen to Jesus.

I've spent several months studying the period between the Last Supper and the day of Pentecost, focusing on the suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of my Lord Jesus Christ. More than once I've wept over the suffering, marveled at His strength of character, wondered at the hard-hearted Jewish leaders, and rejoiced at the victory of the empty tomb! These days in the first century were the most important of all time. If we lose sight of these days, we're truly impoverished.

I don't know of a spiritual or a social problem that wouldn't find help by a long look at the gospel events. I'm more than grateful that I can unite with my Lord Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-7). I can be planted with Christ, so that I can walk in newness of life. I can be freed from an old man of sin and live with a good conscience. I can have joy and peace and hope! I can suffer with Him for a time so that I can one day be glorified with Him forever. I can let Him live with me each day, so that I can live with Him forever. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Our reading comes from the book of Isaiah the prophet, chapter 53, verses 10 to 12.

But the Lord was pleased, To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

That's what the Lord Jesus did for you and for me. Let's pray together. "O Father, we're thankful for His sacrifice as a guilt offering for our sins, so that we might have forgiveness, and might have a relationship as Your children. Father, help us to always do Your will and to love You. In Jesus' name, Amen."

We are continuing in this lesson our study of the words Jesus spoke while on the cross. It must have been hard for him to speak, since crucifixion caused intense thirst and great pain just to breathe. Although it must have been the most painful experience of His life, Jesus didn't complain of His physical pain upon the cross; but something more harsh than physical pain came from His lips. Matthew 27:46 says, "about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" This is not so much a cry of physical pain as it is a deep heartache.

J. W. McGarvey, a biblical scholar in years past, offered this insight, "We can imagine what it would mean to a righteous man to feel that he was forsaken of God. But the more we feel and enjoy the love of another, the greater our sense of loss at being deprived of it. Considering, therefore, the near and dear relationship between the Son and Father, it's evident that we can never know or fathom the depth of anguish which this cry expressed. Suffice it to say, that this was without doubt the most excruciating of all Christ's sufferings, and it, too, was a suffering in our stead."

Jesus bore the punishment for the sins of all people in all places for all time. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13); and this is a quotation from Deuteronomy 21:23. By suffering on the cross, Jesus actually became a curse for our sakes. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isaiah 53:5-6).

We committed the sins, but the Lord bore the punishment for your sins and mine. The scourging fell upon Jesus, so that we could be healed spiritually. Isaiah continued in verse 8, “By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?” You and I deserved the punishment; but Jesus willingly took it in our place. Out of love He laid down His life on His own initiative.

Isaiah says, “But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; And by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, And He will bear their iniquities. And therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:11-12). Jesus endured all the anguish of being a guilt offering and being numbered with the transgressors, yet He endured it to justify the many, to bear their iniquities, and to intercede for their transgressions.

Jesus knew beforehand what He had to face at the trials and at Golgotha. He wept and prayed at Gethsemane that this cup of wrath might pass from Him. In the end He willingly laid down His life out of love for the Father and for you and for me. To take up His cross meant He took up suffering. Second Corinthians 5:21 says that God “made Him (that is, Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus knew what He must do. Hebrews 10:5-7 says: “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.’ And then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book’” (Hebrews 10:5-7). Jesus the Lord took on flesh for the very purpose of offering His body as a sacrifice for our sins.

For Jesus, His sacrifice was very personal. He knew God had to punish Him in order to atone for our sins. So Jesus gave His brow to a crown of thorns, His face to slaps and spit, His back to whips and scourging, His hands and feet to nails, His side to a spear, and His blood to purchase our redemption. First Peter 2:24 says, “And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” His body and blood physically endured the suffering so that He could heal us spiritually with His wounds.

First Peter 3:18 explains, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” Jesus was a sinless, righteous sacrifice for the sins of mankind. Like any sacrifice, Jesus was Himself innocent and righteous but bore the guilt for the guilty. God has forsaken Him, so that He wouldn’t have to forsake you. His excruciating suffering and death for our sins was necessary to satisfy the wrath of the Father against the sins of the world. He bore our sins as a sacrifice that atoned for our sin. He interceded for us and bore the stroke due His people and potentially for the whole world (Hebrews 2:9).

Peter remarks that during this time on the cross, Jesus “was entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23); Peter notes that we should do the same when we’re treated unjustly in 1 Peter 4:19. Jesus suffered physically and emotionally the pain of humiliation, rejection, mocking, scourging, and being crucified. He suffered at Gethsemane with loud crying (Hebrews 5:7), and deep grief to the point of death, knowing that He would bear the punishment for the sins of all people, sins that He never committed. Is it any wonder that when the sky darkened and the earth shook, the Lord Jesus would recall the words of David and at that moment feel forsaken?

With these words, “Why have You forsaken Me?,” Jesus was quoting David in Psalm 22:1. Psalm 22 is the most Messianic of all the psalms. We ought to take some time to read the whole psalm. David, at the end of this Psalm in verses 25 to 31, praises the Lord and declares the Father’s righteousness. Jesus could see God’s will being done in the cross. Even though Jesus was in pain on the cross, and was cursed by hanging on a tree, and had the iniquities of us all laid upon him, He never stopped entrusting Himself to the Father who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:23).

Larry Chouinard observed: “There seems little doubt that Jesus felt forsaken by God, and even though we cannot fathom all that it might have meant to the relationship between Jesus and the Father. Yet, his petition does not express hopelessness or utter despair, but rather a trust in God’s ultimate vindication. This prayer highlights his extraordinary sense of intimacy with God (He says, “my God, my God”), and his confidence that God will break through the alienation that he now feels. Like the righteous sufferer in Psalm 22, Jesus can confidently say, ‘In you our fathers put their trust, they trusted and you delivered them. They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed’ (Psalm 22:4–5).” While Jesus suffered until He died, His future that same day would be in Paradise! He also knew that!

John 19:26-27 says: “When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.” In keeping with the biblical teaching to honor one’s parents found in the Ten Commandments, Jesus provided a place for his mother, who was almost certainly widowed and probably in her late 40s or early 50s. She needed financial support and protection. He gave that responsibility probably to John.

John 19:28-30 says: “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. And therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”

The words, “After this,” refer to his last act which included of course provision for his mother. Then all matters were now “finished,” He completed that which he came to do prior to his death; all of those the Scriptures, including the thirst he was now experiencing, were being fulfilled and the time rapidly approached when he would yield up his spirit to the Father.

Thirst is one of the severest agonies of crucifixion. For the “perfecting” of the Messiah by physical suffering. “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

The sour wine [or vinegar] (Mark 15:36) that the soldiers offered Jesus here was commonly used by soldiers to quench their thirst and it’s different from the “wine that was mixed with myrrh,” which was a sedative that they offered Jesus on the way to the cross in Mark 15:23. Jesus refused the

sedative, but he drank this in order to quench his thirst and to speak. They used hyssop to reach up and put it on his lips. This liquid had a reviving effect and Jesus accepted it.

The final Scripture fulfillment before His death involves Jesus' quenching his thirst with a bit of the wine vinegar. Although John does not specify the exact Old Testament passage he has in mind, we're probably to understand Psalm 69:21, "They ... gave me vinegar for my thirst." Why this choice of beverage (probably better translated "vinegary wine")? Was this a last act of cruelty by a heartless group of soldiers? Probably not. It's possible, but more than likely the jar of vinegary wine was handy to quench the thirst of the soldiers on guard, as they were simply acting out of duty or even as an act of compassion or respect toward Jesus.

Luke provides an additional look at the very last words of Jesus. Luke 23:45-46 says: "It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, and because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last." This is no ordinary crucifixion of a criminal. This is the central event in the history of the world. Its significance is revealed by the darkness and the tearing of the veil of the temple from top to bottom. Matthew 27:51 adds that the earth shook and the rocks were split. It must have been terrifying; but Jesus confidently called out with a loud voice the words of Psalm 31:5, "Father into your hands I commit My spirit." Jesus began and ended the cross with a prayer.

Let's pray. "O, Father, help us to give ourselves into Your hands, to love You, to serve You, no matter what may happen to us and what difficulties we face. We're thankful for our hope in being able to live with You forever. This is our prayer, in the name of Jesus, Amen."

Jesus died knowing that He would rise again on the third day (Luke 9:22). He knew that He had accomplished the will of the Father. He knew that His sacrifice atoned for the sins of humanity. He knew His blood would be poured out for the forgiveness of sins. He knew He would rise from the dead in triumph and be seated at God's right hand. He knew that He would come again to receive His own and take them home to heaven. Jesus willingly suffered, because He knew that His suffering and death wasn't the whole story!

Jesus was willing to endure the cross and to suffer the shame because He knew what the cross would do for you and for me. He knew it would give us hope of forgiveness and eternal life. He knew we could be free from the old man of sin and could be born again to a new life, delivered from sin and death. He loved us enough to suffer and to draw us to Himself and to eternal life.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and you can believe He is the Christ, the Son of God. Because He is Lord, turn from sin and serve Him as your Lord and Savior. With faith, love, and repentance, confess Him and be baptized into Christ. When you're baptized into Christ, you'll receive what He died for; you'll receive the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. When you're baptized into His death, you're united with Him! You're crucified with Him, buried with Him and raised with Him, freed from sin, and able to rise to walk in newness of life according to Romans 6:3-7. Won't you search the Scriptures for yourself, and be obedient to His will?

Focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.