

The Word Of Forgiveness

Luke 23:33-34

Pastor John Miller

Follow with me, verse 33 of Luke chapter 23. It says in verse 33 that, "When they were come to the place, which is called Calvary," Golgotha in other translations, but Calvary, they both mean the place of the skull. "There they crucified him..." That is Jesus, "... and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' And they parted his remnant and cast lots."

On the day that Karl Marx died, March 14, 1883, his housekeeper came to him and said, "Tell me your last words and I'll write them down." Marx replied, "Go, get out. Last words are for fools who haven't said enough." Now certainly, I don't believe that's true with the last words of Jesus Christ. When Jesus was dying on the cross and doing his greatest work of redeeming man from sin, he was also speaking his greatest words.

Jesus uttered seven words, seven statements from the cross. He hung on the cross from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon. So for six hours. The last three hours there was darkness, the earth shook, and the rocks ripped. And Jesus cried out seven times on that cross, and I want to hear his last words. Fittingly, someone said the last words of Jesus are like windows that we can look through and see the very heart of God. Someone also said, "Each of the sayings is an ocean of truth compressed into a drop of speech." I love that.

The Bible says, "Never a man spake like this man." And how fitting that we look at Jesus on the cross, and we enter into the cross by looking at the words that Jesus uttered. They are significant. Now, I'd like to start off by asking why are they significant? And why are they important? And why study these seven words that Jesus uttered from the cross?

Let me give you a few reasons. Number one, because of the person who spoke them. The person who spoke them. These are not the words of Karl Marx. These are not the words of some president, or some sports figure, or some Hollywood actor. These are the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Who is Jesus? The Bible teaches that Jesus is God, come down to earth and taking on humanity, in the likeness of sinful flesh. And through the womb of the Virgin Mary, God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ. And he was fully man and fully in one person.

Jesus was every bit man, as though he were not God, and every bit, God as though he were not man, in one person, the person of Jesus Christ. So he was the God-man. So he's perfectly suited to be the Savior of the world, and that he can lay his hand on humanity, because he was a man. And he can lay his hand on God, because he was God. He's the bridge builder.

By the way, the theologians call that the hypostatic union, big word for meaning two natures in one person, the man Jesus Christ. So he was unique. I want to hear the God-man speak. If God came down to earth, and then he was crucified, rejected by his creation, and he hung upon a

cross, I want to hear the words that he has to utter. Second reason it's significant, is not only the person who spoke them, but the place in which they were spoken.

Notice with me in verse 33, it says, "When they were come to the place, which is called," what? Calvary. The Greek word translated Calvary, we get our word cranium from that word. In Golgotha it's the same, it means skull. Skull was the place of execution, the place of crucifixion, where criminals were taken and they were executed by Roman crucifixion. So Jesus was dying in the place of Calvary. I want to hear what he says there.

And then thirdly, the number of sayings that he uttered. There are, obviously, seven of them, thus the title, The Seven Words From the Cross. Now, there are more than seven actual words, but there were seven times that Jesus spoke. And he probably spoke more than that, but seven recorded utterances of Jesus from the cross. Now, you Bible students that know biblical numerology know that number seven is the number of what? Completion.

Number six, the number of man. Man was created on the sixth day. Seventh day, God rested from his labor. Seven days in the week, seven notes on the scale, seven churches of Asia, seven candlesticks. Look at the book of Revelation, 7, 7, 7, 7. 7 years of tribulation before the second coming. So in biblical numerology, seven speaks of completeness.

So we have the complete utterances of what Jesus said here on the cross. Number four, they're significant, not only because of the person, the place, and the number of sayings, but because of the order in which they were uttered. Now, we're not going to analyze the order too much in depth, but let me mention a few things about the order. The first utterance, the fourth utterance, and the last or seventh utterance are prayers addressed to God. And in the opening utterance, the first and the seventh, last utterance, he addressed God as father.

So this morning, it's the first utterance, "Father." He says, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." What was the last utterance Jesus made on the cross? "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." By the way, Jesus said, "No man takes my life from me. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it up again." And when Jesus said, "Into your hands I dismiss my spirit," Jesus actually dismissed his spirit and gave up, King James says the ghost, or his spirit. He gave his life. It wasn't taken from him. He laid it down for us voluntarily, vicariously, it was the substitution, and victoriously, because three days later he rose from the grave. Amen?

Amen.

Jesus conquered sin and death. But it's interesting, he opens with Father, he closes with Father. First words of Jesus and his earthly ministry were what? "Don't you know I should be about my Father's business." Right? When his mother and father found him in the temple, "What are you doing? You freaked us out." That's a free paraphrase of that.

"We left the gas station and you weren't in the car." Jesus said, "What? No you not that I should be about my Father's business?" Literally, he actually said, "In my Father's house." Jesus was in his father's house. And then when he dies, he opens with Father and he closed with Abba, Our

Father.

But the first three statements from the cross are for others. And the last four relate to Jesus himself. So Jesus was thinking of others first when he died upon the cross. So there's the person, the place, the number, the order. And then fifthly, they all have their roots or origin in the Old Testament scriptures. And this is amazing to me. Every time Jesus opens his mouth and he makes a statement, he utters something, guess what? It's either directly in the Old Testament, he's quoting it. Psalm 22:1, "Eli, eli, sabachthani. Why, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why have you forsaken me? Psalm 22:1.

Or the prophecy of his words on the cross, or the background and the setting are from the Old Testament. So Jesus, filled with the word of God, is uttering that from the cross. Now, I want you to notice in your Bibles what they were doing to Jesus while he spoke. Verse 33, it says "There they," what? "crucified him." It's okay for you to speak when I tell you. You can speak, by the way. If I ask you a question, you can answer it. It's in your Bible. "There they crucified him."

What was happening to Jesus when he spoke these words? He was being crucified. Now, it's bad enough that you die a criminal's death, but you die a vicious, cruel, wicked, painful, shameful death by crucifixion. I mean, we're really humane when we put people to death. And we worry about them living too long, once we're trying to put him to death, and we want it to be painless and easy.

But in the ancient world, there was no more cruel way to die than to be nailed to a cross, and hung there in the open sun for several days, and expire in pain and agony hanging there on the cross. So Jesus was innocent. Pilate said, "I find no fault in him." But he was taken to the court of Caiaphas. He was whipped, he was beaten. And he's taken, the crown of thorns were shoved down over his head. And he took the cross and he went up the Via de la Rosa to the hill of Calvary.

He fell under the weight of it. And they laid down the cross on Calvary. They nailed him to the cross, large nails, large steel nails driven through each hand. His feet would be overlapped, and a large nail would be driven through both feet. And he would be hanging there with just a loin cloth on, naked, in the open elements. And they would just allow them to sit there for days until they died.

As Jesus, the pure, holy, sinless son of God, who loved people, forgave people, and healed people, and now he's been rejected. The Bible says he came unto his own. It means his own creation and his own, that his Jewish people received him not. But John says, "Unto as many as will receive him, trust in him, believe on him, to them he gives the right or the authority to become the children of God."

So Jesus, the Creator, came unto his creation, and they knew him, not they rejected him, and they crucified him. Then we have verse 34, starts with a then. Then what? Then while he was being crucified. Then when they drove the nails, when they spat upon him, when they mocked

him, when they ridiculed him, when they whipped him and beat him, then Jesus spoke.

Verse 34, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Now if you're taking notes, there's three things I want to focus on. Number one, these words of Jesus that he spoke on the cross were a prayer. Jesus is praying. When he says, "Father, forgive them," he's talking to his father, and he's praying. And that's because Jesus was in the habit of praying. He prayed when he was young. He prayed when he started his ministry. He prayed when he was tempted of the devil. He prayed to conquer temptation. He prayed in the temple. Prayed before he picked his disciples. Prayed on the Mount of Beatitudes. He prayed on the Sea of Galilee. He prayed in Gethsemane.

Every time you find Jesus, he's praying, praying, praying, praying. So what's the big surprise now, that as Jesus is hanging on the cross, what else is he going to do? The same thing he's been doing his whole ministry and life. He's not going to play tiddly winks, he's not going to curse, he's not going to defame others, or yell. He's going to pray. I wonder if when you're in a place of suffering, and sorrow, and rejection, and persecution, do you pray? Sometimes people say, "Man, if God really loved me, why'd this go wrong?" or "Why that's happening?" or "I'm not going to pray anymore because God did give me the new car I wanted."

"I'm not going to go to church anymore because God didn't do what I wanted him to do." Here's Jesus hanging on a cruel cross, suffering and dying, and he turns his head upward and he says, "Father." The pain in the agony of Calvary did not interfere with his relationship to his father. His hands could no longer bless the children. They're nailed to a cross. His hands can no longer touch the eyes of the blind and restore sight, or cleanse the leper. His feet were no longer free to walk of the streets of Galilee and take the good news of the kingdom of God. But he can do something. He can pray for those who are persecuting him.

You may say, "I'm in a hospital, I can't serve the Lord." "I'm stuck at a desk all day, I can't serve the Lord." "I'm at home. I'm an invalid." Or "I can't get out, my body won't let me serve the Lord." Then you can pray. Amen?

You can always open your mouth, and you say, "Well, I can't speak." God hears our hearts. And if you can lay on a bed and you can't even speak a word, you can pray. You can talk to God. And the amazing thing to me is when he prays, he's not praying for himself, he's praying for others. This is amazing to me.

Many times, victims of crucifixion shrieked in pain and cursed in anger. Not Jesus. We need to learn a lesson to follow in the steps and to be kind to others. No, Jesus also prayed to his father. Who is Jesus addressing in this invocation, this prayer? He's addressing his father. It's the word abba, father. When Jesus entered into his suffering, and when he emerged victoriously from his suffering, he prayed to his father.

Nothing threatened his relationship with his father. James Stocker, in his excellent book, *The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ*, says these words, "The word father proved that the faith of

Christ, or Jesus, was unshaken by all through which he had passed, and by that which he was now enduring. When righteousness is trampled underfoot and wrong is triumphant, faith is tempted to ask, 'Is there really a God loving and wise seated on the throne of the universe? Or whether, on the contrary,' excuse me, 'all is play and chance?' Great saints have been driven by the pressures of pain and disappointment to challenge God's righteousness in words, which is not lawful for a man to utter. But when the fortunes of Jesus were blackest, and when he was baited by a raging pack of wolf-like enemies, and when he was sinking into unplumbed abyss of pain and desertion, he still said, 'Father'."

God, help us to remember that no matter how black the night, no matter how deep the pit, no matter how difficult our circumstances, that you and I have a father in heaven. We have a father in heaven that we can call out to, that we can cry out to. You're flat on your back, you're in an ICU ward in the hospital, and you look up and you say, "Father, Abba." Whatever your circumstances, you have a father in heaven that loves you. Cry out to God.

But there's a second thing I'd like to point out, and that is the petition itself. What did Jesus pray for? Jesus prayed. Jesus prayed to the Father. But what did he ask? What did he ask Abba Father to do? The answer is verse 35, look at it in your Bible. "Forgive them." Verse 34. Verse 34, "Forgive them." And in the Greek, by the way, you don't get this in the English translation, he repeats it. So it's believed that several times he uttered these words. "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do," At the beginning of his crucifixion. In the middle of his crucifixion, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." And at the end of his crucifixion, he uttered the words again, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing."

I don't know about you, but I stand in awe. I stand in awe that Jesus could pray for his enemies. Note that little word them. Father forgive who? Them. Who is the them? Roman soldiers, Jewish people, spitting, and mocking, and jeering, "He saved others, himself he cannot save. Let him come down from that cross if he be the Messiah, the Savior." And the Jewish leaders are the Jewish authorities. So who is he praying for? His enemies. And what did he pray for his enemies? "Forgive them." You know what I would've prayed? "Father, fry them. Smoke them, Lord. Wipe them out. Destroy them." That's understandable.

Jesus prayed, "Forgive them." That amazes me. It's hard in our natural state to forgive people who sin against us. Bad people, let's get them. I'm not a movie guy, but whenever I watch a western movie where there's a bad guy and a good guy, and in the end of the movie the good guy has the bad guy? The good guy has the bad guy, and he can get him. I just freak out, "Hit him, punch him." Man, I've been ticked off with this guy the whole movie. I want to see the good guy's fist go right into his face. This is your pastor sharing his heart with you right now. Pray for me.

You're in a theater, Pastor John, "Kill him!" "Is that Pastor Miller?" Because that's natural, right? That's the natural response. But when Jesus comes to live in our hearts, we can respond supernaturally. We can respond like Christ. He prays, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do."

Now, why did Jesus pray this prayer? Let me give you some reasons why Jesus prayed this prayer. Number one, it was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Isaiah 53:12, write that down. Isaiah 53:12, it tells us there that he on the cross would make intercession for the transgressors. There would be on his right hand and on his left hand. And next week we look at this passage where Jesus says, "Today, you'll be with me in paradise." But we also know that Jesus was praying for those who were sinning against him and crucifying him. So it was a fulfillment of prophecy.

Number two, he was practicing the very message that he preached. Matthew 5:44, this is what Jesus preached in life, "Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." I haven't said this all morning, but let me, it just popped in my brain. Let me say this right now. We have a lot of ISIS in the news right now. Talk about ISIS and radical Islamic extremists and so forth. No one's actually stopping to say, "What does the Koran teach?" No one's stopping and saying, "What does the Koran actually teach?" They're just, "oh, this is not Islam. They're just radicals." And then no one stops and says, "What does the Koran actually teach?"

These words come from the lips of Jesus Christ, "Love your enemies. Pray for those which persecute you. And bless them which despitefully..." Don't cut off their head. Don't tell them to convert or you'll murder them. You say, "Well, what about the Crusades? The Christians have done that." I think maybe our President just mentioned that a few weeks ago. I didn't hear the speech. "Christians do the same thing." Yes, in violation of what Jesus taught, in violation of what Jesus taught.

The question is, is what they're doing, these atrocities, in violation of what the Koran teaches? You do your own homework. Jesus said, "Love your enemies. Pray for those which persecute you. Bless those which despitefully use you." This is the words of Jesus Christ. Now, that was a little soap box. I said I hadn't said that all morning, but it popped in my brain and I wanted to share that. Jesus tells us to love his enemies.

Now, my point was this. Jesus was doing what he told us to do. That's not easy, right? I do a lot of preaching, it's not easy to do what I tell people to do. We advertise the marriage series. I teach you how to be married. I'm married too. That's a challenge.

Sometimes my wife has to remind me, "Remember your sermon last week, John, calm down. I'll play it for you if you need to hear it again." To practice what you preach is not easy. It's easy to preach, it's the practice that's hard. Jesus preached love your enemies. And guess what He does when he's hanging on the cross? He prays for them. He's practicing what he preached in his life.

You know the Romans actually worshiped the God Revenge. They actually worshiped the God Revenge. They freaked out at movies too. And we should follow the example of Jesus. Here it is, 1 Peter 2:23, "He did not retaliate when he was hanging on the cross, when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered." So guess what? We should do the same. Being

defamed, we shouldn't revile back. Being persecuted, we shouldn't persecute back. Being hated, we should show love and forgiveness.

That's the message of the statement that Jesus utters from the cross. But let me tell you thirdly, it was the purpose for which he came, his death. Why did Jesus come to die? So that we could be, what? Forgiven. There's a false theory of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. You know what it is? It's that when Jesus died on the cross, the reason he died on the cross was to show us an example of sacrifice for others, to show us the example of the love of God.

Did he do that? Yes. Is that why he died? No. He died to save us from sin. S-I-N. He died on the cross and took our sin, your sin, my sin, and he became a substitute. That's the heart of the cross. He took my sin on the cross so that I could be forgiven, so that he could give me his righteousness.

Amen.

Did he leave us an example? Yeah. Does it demonstrate the love of God? Yes. But that's not why he died. That's not the reason for the crucifixion. Jesus died for our sins. That was the purpose of his death. So naturally, as he's hanging on the cross, he's going to seek the forgiveness of those who are the ones who are crucifying him. Jesus came to the world for that purpose.

Do you know forgiveness is what the cross is all about, and forgiveness is man's greatest need? Now, I can actually tell you, not even knowing many of you, but I can tell you this morning what your greatest need is. It's not for a new car, it's not for a new house, not for a new job. It's not for a new haircut. It's not for a new wife or a new husband. "I need a new wife." "I need a new husband." "I need a wife." "I need a husband."

It's for forgiveness, because we all need forgiveness. Man's greatest need is forgiveness. Jesus said it like this, "What would it profit you if you gained the whole world?" You gained, you got the car, you got the house, you got the wife, you got the clothes, you got the bod, you got the haircut. What would it profit you if you gained the whole world and you lose your soul in the process? Nothing. What good does it do to have the whole world when you don't have forgiveness, and you die and you go to hell for all eternity?

So our greatest need, our most important need today is for forgiveness, that we might be forgiven. So Jesus is hanging on the cross. He knew this was their greatest need and that's what he prayed for. Now, we can't forgive others until we experience forgiveness ourselves. If you are married today and you're having a hard time forgiving your husband, or forgiving your wife, or forgiving somebody that lied about you, or hurt you, or abused you, maybe when you were younger, guess what? You need to come to the cross and be forgiven yourself.

And then after you come to the cross and you experience forgiveness, stay at the cross to learn how to be forgiving. Those are the words of Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher. He said, "We come to the cross to be forgiven. We stay at the cross to be forgiving. We learn how

to forgive others." In Ephesians chapter five, it says it like this, or Ephesians 4, excuse me, verse 32, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you."

So there it is. As Jesus prayed for their forgiveness, so we should be forgiving, and kind, and tender-hearted to others. So Jesus prayed and Jesus pleaded. And I want you to notice now, thirdly, the plea that Jesus gave. The petition, now the plea. Verse 34, he says, "For they know not what they do." So he prayed to the Father, he petitioned the Father to forgive them, and then he pleaded to the Father, "They know not what they do."

Notice in verse 34, the word for. So it's the rationale, it's the reason behind his petition. Why should God the Father forgive them? Because they don't know what they're doing. That's the reason. He pleads that they're ignorant. This is an interesting thought. Jesus not only prayed to the Father for their forgiveness, but he pleaded for the reason that they should be forgiven. He's like a lawyer pleading in a courtroom.

Now, if I ever have to go to court, I want a good lawyer, right? You don't want a messed up lawyer. You want a good lawyer, because your life is in the balance, or the verdict is in the hands of this lawyer and this judge. What better lawyer can you have than Jesus Christ? Amen?

Amen.

If I'm going to stand before God the Father, I want his son, Jesus, to plead for me., you know? "Hey ,Jesus, hey, can you talk to the Father for me? Can you plead my case? Father, forgive John Miller. He's a dodo bird."

He'd be a little more kind though. He'd say, "He knows not what he's doing." Now, what were they ignorant of? Let me break it down for you. First of all, they were ignorant of his person. They were ignorant of his person. In 1 Corinthians 2:8, Paul says, "Which none of the princes of this world had known, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

It's the same today. People reject Jesus Christ. You know why? They don't know who he is. They don't know who he is. Who is Jesus Christ? He is God in flesh. Let me tell you who Jesus Christ is. God. Got that? He is God incarnate, God in flesh. The second person of the Godhead came down to earth, and entered Earth through the womb of the Virgin Mary. He took on humanity, sinless humanity, but full humanity.

He never ceased being God. So he's fully God and fully man in one person, as I mentioned earlier in the sermon. But they rejected the God-man. They didn't know who he was. Secondly, they were ignorant of the enormity of their sin. Think of what they were doing. They are crucifying the Son of God. They are rejecting their Creator. Someone said it like this, "He hung upon a cross of wood, but he made the hill on which it stood." Amazing thought. They're rejecting God.

Do you know that when you reject Jesus Christ, you're rejecting God? The Bible Says,"

whoever has not the Son, has not the Father." There's no other way to know God. There's no other way to get God. The Bible says there's one God, and there's one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins." There's only one way to get to God, and that's through Jesus Christ. That's why Jesus said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. And no one..." What does the word no one mean? No one. I looked that up in the Greek.

No one comes to who? The Father, except through me. You go, "That's too narrow. That's too exclusive." Well then take it up with God, he's the one that said it, not me. It's true. You're in a math class at school and you get a wrong answer on an equation. You tell the teacher, "That's too narrow. That's just too narrow. There's other answers to the question." And you get an F, you got it wrong. There's only one way to God and that's through Jesus Christ. And Jesus came to reveal to them the enormity of their sin.

They didn't know what they were doing, crucifying the Son of God, rejecting God himself. We cannot be forgiven until we understand that we have sinned, and our sin is great. They didn't understand the enormity of their sin. They didn't realize that we needed a Savior. Do you understand the enormity of your sin when you reject Jesus Christ? If you reject Jesus Christ, that you cannot be forgiven?

That's, by the way, what I believe is the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit. The only sin that will never be forgiven is the rejection of God's Son who made provision for you to go to heaven and be forgiven. You reject that, there's no more sacrifice. There's no more forgiveness. And the best thing that can happen to you this morning, and I want everyone to leave here today forgiven by God and forgiving others, the best thing for you is to know I'm a sinner and I need a Savior. And that I need to turn from my sin and I need to trust in Jesus Christ who is the Savior from my sin. They were also ignorant that their sin was great. We need to know the enormity of our sin and the greatness of our sin, but the greatness of his grace and his mercy and love.

Now, this prayer of Jesus reminds us that no sin is too great to be forgiven. Don't forget that. How often I've had people say, "Well, Pastor Miller, God can't forgive me. I did this," or "I did that," or "I've done this," or "I've really lived a wicked life." No sin too great, no pit too deep. But God's love is deeper still. No sin too black, but the blood of Jesus Christ can't wash, and cleanse, and forgive.

The worst criminal, the most wicked, vile sinner can be forgiven and made righteous and accepted through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, if they will turn from their sin and trust him as their Savior. That's the reason Jesus came, so that we might be forgiven. But here's the problem, forgiveness must be accepted. And when Jesus uttered these words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," a lot of people have problems with that. Like, were they forgiven? Did the Father answer his prayer? And why didn't Jesus, who had the power and authority to forgive sins, why didn't Jesus hanging on the cross just said, "You're all forgiven. It's cool. I'll see you in heaven"?

Why didn't he just forgive their sins? He said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven." He had the power to do that. I think there's some insight to this question when we look at Matthew 27:49. And we won't turn there, but I'll just relate the verse. Matthew 27:49, "When Jesus was hanging on the cross, and he cried, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,' being interpreted, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" The crowd standing by said, "He's calling for Elijah."

And someone ran quick, the Bible tells us. They got a sponge of water, they put it on a stick, and they went over. And by the way, Jesus' feet were probably only a couple feet off the ground, suspended there between heaven and earth, left heaven, rejected on earth, suspended on the cross. And they reached the stick out to give him something to drink and here's what they said. They said, "Let it alone." They said, "Stop, don't do that." Translated in Matthew 27:49, "Let it be," or "Let be," or it could be rendered, "Don't interfere," or "Hold off." The very same word translated don't interfere, in Matthew 27:49, is the very same word translated forgive in verse 34 of Luke chapter 23.

So what was Jesus praying for? Jesus was actually saying to the Father, "Hold off your judgment. Hold off your wrath. Spare them. Let them be. Don't destroy them right now, in order that they could become aware of their sin, and then receive forgiveness." There's nothing more important for you today than to become aware of your sin before you die and receive the forgiveness that God wants to offer you.

So Jesus was saying that. Now, I asked the question a moment ago, did God the Father answer Jesus' prayer? Guess what? Yes, he did. And the answer was Acts chapter 2, it's called the Day of Pentecost. You say, "Well, what happened in Acts chapter 2?" Everyone's gathered in Jerusalem. It's the Feast of Passover. The Holy Spirit falls on the 120 in the upper room. And Peter stands up, I'll make a long story short, he stands up on the day of Pentecost and he preaches a Pentecostal sermon.

The church is born, they're filled with the Holy Spirit, and he preaches to the very same people that Jesus just prayed for. The crowd that were gathered around the cross, mocking and jeering, the same crowd, Peter preaches to them the gospel. And he says, "You, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain. But God raised them from the dead. And I'm here to testify to you today that God can forgive your sins and he can give you the hope of heaven."

And the Bible says that they who listened to Peter's sermon were cut to the heart. They were convicted by the Spirit. And they said, "Man, brethren, what should we do?" And Peter said these words, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And this is what happens. God's spirit comes to you as he did on the day of Pentecost, and he says to you, "You are a sinner."

Now, our culture today tells you, "No, don't believe that. Don't listen to that." But the Bible tells you, all have sinned. All have come short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There's no one righteous, no, not one." You ever lied? You ever stoled anything? Remember the army man you

stole from the toy store when you were eight years old? God saw that. Honor thy father and thy mother. No other gods before him. Thou shalt not covet. That's a good one. Don't raise your hand, but anybody covet? "Look at that car. Wow." Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

On and on you could go. We've all sinned. Not only that, we're born in sin, with a sin nature, and then we sin because we're sinners. And the best thing that can happen to you this morning, if you're going to leave here forgiven, and you're going to leave here cleansed in your heart, and you're going to leave here right with God, and able to forgive others that sinned against you, best thing for you today is to realize, I need forgiveness. I need forgiveness.

When the prodigal son came back to his father, he said, "Father, I've sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son." We need to come to God and say, "God, I've sinned against you. I've sinned against others, my wife, my children, my husband. I've sinned against others. And I've sinned in your sight. I'm no longer, I'm not worthy. But God, would you please forgive me, and come into my heart, and make me your child?" And you do that today, and God will forgive all of your sins.

Jesus Christ will cleanse your heart, and he will make you his child, and he will give you the hope of heaven. And you can't plead ignorance because you just heard my sermon. You know who Jesus is. You know why Jesus died. You know that you're a sinner. And you know that He's the only way for you to be forgiven. Oh, the joy of sins forgiven. You don't have to leave here with the guilt and with the shame. You don't have to leave here with a blackness in your heart. You can leave here with a clean heart. You can leave here with a new heart.

You can leave here with a renewed heart. That's why David said, "Create in me a clean heart, oh God." God can give you a new heart today. So if you haven't received Jesus Christ, you receive him today, I'm going to give you that opportunity, because we've looked through the first window. "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." And what do we learn in this window? That the heart of God is forgiving and kind, that God's heart is for forgiveness. So don't leave here today without being forgiven of your sin. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer before we close.