

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - PART 1
What Jesus taught about salvation
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: John 3:14-17
Subject: What happens when people believe in Jesus who was lifted up
Complement: They will not perish but have everlasting life
Exegetical idea: When people believe in Jesus who was lifted up they will not perish but have everlasting life.
Homiletical idea: **Look in faith to Jesus and live!**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to believe that Jesus is the Savior and to invite them to look to Him in faith and live.

Introduction

I'm sure that many of you have received this e-mail. It came as part of the junk e-mail that I receive and delete on a regular basis. I had already deleted this particular e-mail message months ago, so I had to go to a search engine and find it again! This e-mail records the supposed comments of some children who obviously didn't know much about the Bible. Here are just a few examples:

Adam and Eve were created from an apple.
Noah's wife was Joan of Ark. (Did you get this e-mail too?)
Lots' wife was a pillar of salt by day and a ball of fire by night.
Moses went to the top of Mt. Cyanide to get the ten commandments
The seventh commandment is "Thou shalt not admit adultery."
Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Geritol.
Solomon had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
Samson slayed the Philistines, (sometimes referred to as the Finkelsteins) with the axe of the apostles.
And the epistles were the wives of the apostles.

Now, those comments seem humorous at first. But actually, they illustrate a troublesome trend in our culture. Children are growing up knowing less and less about the great stories of the Bible. We are rapidly becoming a biblically illiterate society. I want to suggest to you this

morning that knowing the great stories of the Bible not only helps us to learn valuable lessons for our own lives today (Rom 15:4), but it also helps us to understand the important teachings of Scripture.

The passage of Scripture that we are going to study today is a case in point. This is the first sermon in our series entitled “What Jesus Taught.” Today’s sermon is entitled “What Jesus taught about salvation.” Perhaps it should be more accurately entitled “A brief consideration of what Jesus taught about salvation.” But the teaching of Jesus about salvation that we are going to consider together this morning includes one of the significant stories from Bible history. Unless we are acquainted with that story, we will not be able to fully grasp the important truth that Jesus wants to convey.

So let’s turn to these words of Jesus about salvation. They are found in John 3:14-17. “.....” The context of these words is a conversation between Jesus and a leader of the Jews namedNicodemus. That’s right. Nicodemus, you may remember was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. He came to Jesus by night, convinced that Jesus is a teacher sent from God. And in the context of that conversation, Jesus makes these comments about salvation. Let’s look again at the words of Jesus in John 3:14. “.....”

How many of you are familiar with the story that Jesus is referring to here in John 3:14? It happened 1300 years earlier, during the time when Moses was leading the children of Israel. We find this significant Bible story in the Old Testament book of Numbers. Aaron, the brother of Moses, has just died. The children of Israel are making a lengthy detour around the territory of the Edomites, and they are complaining against God, once again.

We can read the story starting in Numbers 21:4-5. “.....” The children of Israel

are definitely having a bad day. Even the blessings of God, including the daily manna which God has provided for them, are a cause for complaint. “Our soul loathes this worthless bread.” And then comes verse 6 of Numbers 21. And the picture that it presents is a troubling one to many. “So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.” (Num 21:6) A person could create a horrible picture of God from that one verse: a mean-spirited vindictive Deity who zaps people when they step out of line. Is that an accurate description of the character of God? Not if you believe the words of Jesus, who said, “If you have seen Me you have seen the Father.” Jesus told us that God so loved the world. So what’s happening here in Numbers 21:6. “So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.” I believe that Scripture can give us the answer that we need. Moses reminds the children of Israel, in Deut 8:15, that the Lord had led them “through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water.” The dangers and the difficulties were all around them. But the Lord had provided for them. The Lord had provided food in the form of manna. He had provided water from the Rock. And The Lord had protected them from the fiery serpents and scorpions. But now they are complaining against God and against Moses. “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?” Num 21:5. The unspoken message is clear. “We wish that we weren’t Your people. We wish that You would just leave us alone.” And God honors their request. He allows them to face life and death without Him if that is their desire.

And what’s the result of this willful separation from God? The people are bitten by fiery serpents. Perhaps they were called fiery serpents because their venom burned like fire. And the

Bible tells us that many people died. Can you imagine the panic within the camp of Israel? Out in the middle of a hostile desert, with nowhere to hide? And even if you survived through the day, you had the face the uncertainty of the night. And cries were heard all around the camp as more as still more were bitten by these fiery serpents.

We don't know how long it took, but finally to children of Israel came to their senses, and sent representatives to talk with Moses. We read in Numbers 21:7, "....." And this was the answer that Moses received from the LORD. "Make a fiery serpent, and set in on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." Num 21:8 Does that make any sense to you? How could looking at a replica of the problem provide a solution? That doesn't make any sense at all. And that's the whole point. It doesn't make any sense. It's a simple act of obedience. The LORD asks the children of Israel to reaffirm their commitment to Him as their God. They are invited to just do what the LORD asks them to do.

And the Bible records in Num 21:9, "So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." We are not talking here about a skeptical glance with an angry scowl on your face. We are talking about a look of faith, a look of dependence, trusting that the LORD will be faithful to His promise. And the Word of God tells us that "if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." I imagine another cry now going up in the camp. Not a cry of death, but a cry of life. Not a cry of despair. But a cry of hope. "The LORD has told us to look at the bronze serpent and we will live. Look and live! Look and live!"

Undoubtedly there were some who saw no sense either in God's instructions or the invitation. And so instead of looking towards God's provision, they looked away. And they

died in their rebellion. But some repentant sinners had the courage to believe the Word of God. They had courage to do what God asked them to do. And so in a simple act of faith, perhaps with the assistance of those around them, they made their way toward the center of the camp, and when they looked in faith, in simple obedience to the Word of God, they lived!

And Jesus says to Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” What did Jesus mean when He said, “Even so must the Son of Man be LIFTED UP?” Obviously, this “lifting up” is very important. Listen to the words of Jesus recorded in John 8:28-29. “.....”

But again I ask, What is this lifting up of the Son of Man that must happen? Let’s listen again to the words of Jesus, found in John 12:32. “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” And the apostle John comments, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in John 12:33, “This He said, signifying by what death He would die.”

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” Notice carefully the words of Jesus. “Even so MUST the Son of Man be lifted up.” Why? The death of Jesus on the cross is not a peripheral addendum to the gospel story. It is, rather, at the very center of God’s saving activity. That’s why the apostle Paul declares, “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Gal 6:14) and “I have determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” (1 Cor 2:2). “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor 1:18)

Jesus tells us, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son what whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.” (Jn 3:14-17)

When a person looks in faith to Jesus, when a person realizes and accepts that God does not desire to condemn us but to save us, then, and only then, a person finds life. Abundant life. Life in all its fullness. Everlasting life. And the cry needs to go out, just as a cry went out in the camp of Israel. Not a cry of death but a cry of life. Not a cry of despair, but a cry of hope. Look to the provision that God has made. Look in faith to Jesus, and live!

Unfortunately, there will be some who reject this gracious offer. It was so during this crisis in the desert and it was so even during the ministry of Jesus. Luke records the story of a certain ruler, we call him the rich young ruler, who came to Jesus with a question about salvation. We can read the question in Luke 18:18. “.....” That’s a strange question, but it reveals a great deal about the rich young ruler. First, I want you to notice what this ruler calls Jesus. “Good Teacher.” It’s a polite title. Maybe even flattering. But it reveals a lack of commitment on the part of the speaker. Some called Jesus Master. Others called Him Lord. This ruler simply addresses Him as “Teacher.” And to add a little flattery perhaps, “Good Teacher.” And Jesus cuts through all the fluff. Follow along in Luke 18:19, “.....” In other words, “Are you willing to recognize Me for who I am? I am indeed the One who alone can be called good.”

But I want you to notice something else that tells us a great deal about this ruler. Listen to his words again: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Strange words indeed. You can’t do anything to inherit something. Inheritance comes because of who you are. Inheritance comes

because you are in relationship with the person who is offering the gift (Jn 17:3). You don't do anything to inherit eternal life. Eternal life is a gift to those who follow Jesus. Eternal life is a gift to those who look to Jesus in faith. And if anything gets in the way, whether it's our skepticism, or our pride, or our possessions, whatever it is.....we need to let go of it, and choose to look in faith to Jesus and live. Unfortunately, the rich young ruler refused to look to God's provision and find life. And we never hear from him again.

In contrast, we read the story of Jesus' encounter with a tax collector, recorded in Luke 19:1-10. It's interesting to see the similarities between this story and that of the meeting with the rich young ruler. This man is also rich. Not only is Zacchaeus a tax collector; and there were probably many local tax collectors in Jericho, with its balsam trade and traffic from the eastern to the western side of the Jordan. Not only is Zacchaeus a tax collector; he is a chief tax collector. He probably wore a luxurious Babylonian robe, and sandals made of the finest leather. But none of that seemed to matter now, as he climbed up that sycamore fig tree. You see, just like the rich young ruler, this rich tax collector also wanted to speak with Jesus. But that's where the similarities end. Because instead of calling Jesus "Good Teacher," Zacchaeus calls Him "Lord." And instead of turning away sorrowfully, Zacchaeus receives Jesus joyfully. And instead of hoarding his money, Zacchaeus gives it away. "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." Lk 19:8. His generosity and his humility demonstrate a change of heart. Zacchaeus has looked in faith to Jesus and found life! And Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house." Why? Because Zacchaeus gave half of what he owned to the poor? No. Why then has salvation come to his house? Because he demonstrated humility by restoring fourfold to anyone that he had wronged.

No. Those actions are just evidences that salvation has come to his house. Salvation came to Zacchaeus' house because he looked in faith to Jesus. He received Jesus joyfully. He called Jesus Lord.. "Today," Jesus said, "salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And Jesus accomplished that mission of seeking and saving the lost by being lifted up, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. And the prophesy of Jesus was fulfilled: "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." That doesn't mean that everyone will choose to look in faith to Jesus and live. Some will choose to deliberately turn away and die in their sins. But everyone will be drawn to the perfect demonstration of the Father's love. And everyone will need to make a decision, one way or the other. And whoever chooses to look in faith to Jesus will live.

"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world"(Jn 1:29). "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes 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"(Is 53:5-6). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"(Rom 6:8). "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures...He was buried, and...He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures"(1 Cor 15:3-4)

The teaching of Jesus about salvation is unmistakably clear: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." So let the cry go out throughout the camp. Let the cry go out throughout the church. Let the cry go out throughout the community. Let the cry go

out throughout the world. Not a cry of death, but a cry of life. Not a cry of despair, but a cry of hope. Today salvation has come to this house. Jesus, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Look in faith to Jesus and live!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord Jesus would say again this morning, "Today salvation has come to this house"? Wouldn't that be wonderful? We're going to sing a hymn in response to the message this morning: "My Jesus, I love Thee." You'll find the words in your bulletin. As we sing this song together, if you sense the invitation to look in faith to Jesus and find life this morning, I want to encourage you not to resist God's invitation. God so loves the world, and that includes you, that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. If you sense the invitation to look in faith to Jesus this morning, if you want to receive Jesus joyfully, just like Zacchaeus, if you want to hear Jesus say to you, "Today salvation has come to this house," I want to invite you to come forward while we sing and meet me here at the front of the church. Look in faith to Jesus and live! And for those who have already made that decision, for those who have already looked in faith to Jesus and found life, let us sing this song with joy in our hearts!

The following are the actual answers (including spelling and punctuation errors) given by students who were being tested on their biblical knowledge (as reported in Vancouver Sun):

Adam and Eve were created from an apple.

Noah's wife was Joan of Ark.

Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day and a ball of fire by night.

Samson slayed the Philistines with the axe of the apostles.

Moses went to the top of Mt. Cyanide to get the 10 Commandments.

The seventh commandment is "thou shalt not admit adultery."

Joshua led the Hebrews in the battle of Geritol.

Solomon had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.

The people who followed Jesus were called the 12 decibels.

The epistles were the wives of the apostles.

Matthew was one of the opossums.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - PART 2
What Jesus taught about the Scriptures
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Matt 4:4, Jn 5:39-40
Subject: What Jesus taught about the Scriptures
Complements: they are the Word of God
a defense against the enemy
a testimony about Himself
Exegetical idea: Jesus taught that the Scriptures are the Word of God which provide a defense against the enemy and testify about Himself
Homiletical idea: **Spend time with the Word of God.**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and to motivate them to read the Scriptures in order to draw closer to Jesus.

Introduction

If I believe the words of the author of this article which I downloaded from the American Humanist Association, I'm a deluded fool. He would probably label me as "a promoter of deceptive and destructive teachings!" The author of this article entitled "Some reasons why humanists reject the bible" is the president of a chapter of the American Humanist Association, and he confronts us with these words: "...." ([Http://www.americanhumanist.org/humanism/thebible.html](http://www.americanhumanist.org/humanism/thebible.html))

Perhaps even more shocking is that fact that even some Christians are losing confidence in the Scriptures. Many Christian theologians have embraced a methodology where, and I quote, "critical reason decides what is reality in the Bible, and what cannot be reality." (Eta Linnemann, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology*, p. 88). And so the Scriptures are being demythologized. Christians are abandoning the creation account are unscientific. Miracle accounts are being discarded or explained away based on what seems reasonable to the reader. Some of you have probably heard the rational explanation for the feeding of the 5000. It is, according to those who adopt a critical approach to the Scriptures, irrational to believe that Jesus

could feed 5000 men, plus women and children, with 5 loaves and 2 fish. What really happened was this. Everyone actually had food with them, but no one wanted to share it. When the young lad demonstrated a willingness to share his lunch with Jesus, the hearts of the people were touched and they all shared their food with each other. Isn't that a miracle? The miracle of love! Well, I believe that love is a miracle. But that's not what the Bible says happened. And the crowd didn't want to make the little boy king immediately after this miraculous feeding of the 5000. They wanted to make Jesus king. Even the enemies of Jesus could not deny the supernatural signs and wonders that he performed. And yet today, many try to explain them away or discard them as fictitious.

So what is the truth about the Scriptures? And how should we respond to this erosion of confidence in the Scriptures? If we choose to base our convictions on current popular opinion, we're in serious trouble. I want to suggest that it would be wise to carefully consider what Jesus taught about the Scriptures.

This is the second sermon in our series on What Jesus Taught. Last week, we considered what Jesus taught about salvation. This morning I would like to explore with you 3 important truths that Jesus taught about the Scriptures.

The first important truth that Jesus taught about the Scriptures is this: **The Scriptures are the Word of God.** The Scriptures are more than a helpful collection of religious ideas. The Scriptures are the Word of God. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus responded to Satan's temptation by quoting from the Scriptures. He said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Matt 4:4 (Deut 8:3) And how do we receive that word which proceeds from the mouth of God? Through

the oral and written testimony of the prophets.

Jesus accepted the testimony of the Scriptures by faith as the word of God. He had undoubtedly heard the story of the young prophet Jeremiah. The LORD called Jeremiah to be a prophet and Jeremiah responded, in Jer 1:6, “Ah, LORD God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.” And the Lord said to Jeremiah, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,” says the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me: “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.” Jer 1:7-9

For Jesus, the testimony of the prophets was much more than helpful religious counsel—it was the Word of God, transmitted through a human instrument. And the disciples of Jesus expressed the same conviction. The apostle Peter reminds us that no prophecy, no prophetic word of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Pet 1:20-21

Many unbelievers, and even some Christians, do not accept the early chapters of the book of Genesis as reliable history, but Jesus accepted those Scriptures as the reliable Word of God. Jesus said, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female.’” Matt 19:4 Jesus spoke of the blood of righteous Abel, Matt 23:35, and the days of Noah when “Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” Lk 17:27

Why did Jesus believe that those events really happened? He couldn’t prove their historicity based on human logic or reason. Rather, Jesus accepted the Scriptures by faith as the reliable Word of God. That’s why He could recount the story of Jonah being in the belly of a

great fish for three days and three nights as a historical fact. It doesn't make sense to human reason. From a human perspective, the story of Jonah sounds like a preposterous fish story. But Jesus accepted the story by faith as a historical fact because it was recorded in the Scriptures. And Jesus accepted the Scriptures as the Word of God...a reliable testimony from God to the prophets by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Palestinian revisionists and biblical minimalists are saying that Bible characters like Moses and King David never existed. They are simply a fabrication of those who desire to promote a Zionist agenda. But Jesus believed in the historicity of Moses and of King David. Jesus spoke of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, Jn 3:14 and He also spoke of King David, quoting the words of David recorded in Psalm 110 as being spoken "by the Holy Spirit." Mk 12:36

Yes, Jesus believed in the reliability of the Scriptures. He accepted the Scriptures as the word of God. And that's why He memorized the Scriptures. Because they weren't simply the pious musings of religious leaders. The Scriptures were, and still are, the Word of God. That's one important truth that Jesus taught about the Scriptures. And it's my prayer that it might be said of us, as it was of the Thessalonian believers, in 1 Thess 2:13, "We also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe."

A second important truth that Jesus taught about the Scriptures is this: **The Scriptures are a defense against the enemy.** Let's look again at the Word of God in Matt 4 where Jesus is attacked by the enemy. On every occasion, Jesus responds with the Word of God. When Jesus

is tempted to turn stones into bread, he says, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Matt 4:4 (Deut 8:3). When Jesus is tempted to presume upon the mercy of God, He replies, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’” Matt 4:7 (Deut 6:16). And when Jesus is tempted to bow down and worship Satan with the deceptive promise that the whole world will be given to Him, Jesus replies, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.” Matt 4:10 (Deut 6:13, 10:20) The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated in this encounter with Satan the truth of the Word of God recorded in Eph 6:17 that “the sword of the Spirit..is the word of God.” The Greek word used both in Matt 4:4 and Eph 6:17 is not the common word $\bar{\epsilon}\lambda\lambda\eta$ (\cong H, which is used in Heb 4:12 where it says “The Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” Rather, the Greek word used both in Matt 4:4 and Eph 6:17 is the word $\Pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\lambda\omicron$, a specific word or saying. Jesus doesn’t just hold up the Bible, or a Bible scroll like some kind of lucky charm and say, “The Bible, the Bible, the Bible.” No, Jesus responds to the attacks of Satan with specific words from the Word of God.

And why is it that the Scriptures are a defense against the enemy? Because Satan is a liar and a deceiver, but the Word of God is truth. So when Satan comes to you and says, “You’re a sinner. You’re a loser. You might as well just give up and be damned,” the Word of God tells you the truth in 1 Jn 1:9. “If we confess our sins”.....say it with me, brothers and sisters.....”If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse from ALL unrighteousness.” 1 Jn 1:9 And the truth of the Word of God dispels Satan’s lie. When Satan comes to you and tries to intimidate you and fill you with fear, the Word of God tells you the truth: “Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will

strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Is 41:10
When Satan tries to discourage you because the way ahead seems uncertain, the Word of God tells you the truth: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye.” Ps 32:8

Yes, Jesus taught that the Word of God is a defense against the enemy. And we have proved that to be true in our own lives, haven't we? I remember an incident that happened when I was about 10 years old. I was living about a mile from the campus of Newbold College, in the village of Binfield, England. It was a Friday evening, and apparently I had gone to a vespers program at the church. I'm not sure why I was allowed to walk home by myself. It seems a little dangerous in retrospect. But we lived less than a mile from the campus, down a country road. On my way home, after a brief detour to escort a young lady to her front door, I was passing the ruins of an old building. All of a sudden, I heard a blood-curdling scream. I was terrified. Even as a ten year old, I clearly saw this situation as an attempt by the enemy to intimidate me. But something amazing happened. The words of Psalm 23 came immediately to my mind. I had memorized them for Pathfinders. And I embraced those words, not simply as the words of David, but as the words of God. “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” And as I repeated that psalm, God's Word became to me “the sword of the Spirit.” Eph 6:17 The Lord kept me in perfect peace as my mind was focused on Him. Is 26:3 I learned that night, and I have learned many times since then, that the Scriptures are a defense against the enemy.

But there's a third truth that Jesus taught about the Scriptures: **The Scriptures are a testimony about Jesus Christ.** There were religious leaders in Jesus' day who thought that they

could find life by knowing the Scriptures. And so they became experts in the Torah. I've been told that there were Rabbis who knew that Hebrew Scriptures so well that they could push a pin through a sacred scroll and tell you what letters it would pierce. Now, I'm not sure if that's true. But these religious leaders were experts in what the Scriptures said. Tragically, in their lifelong quest for Biblical knowledge, they were missing the whole purpose of the Scriptures. Listen to the words of Jesus in Jn 5:39-40. "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."

That's a bold claim. Jesus says, "The Scriptures are a testimony about Me!" When the Risen Jesus gave a Bible study to the two disciples that He met on the road to Emmaus, Luke records that "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Lk 24:27 What a Bible study that must have been! I'm going to ask Jesus if He would give that Bible study again in the Kingdom of Heaven. And the purpose for reading the Scriptures is not just to gain more information about Jesus. Satan and those angels who followed him in his rebellion have lots of information about Jesus. Many of those who will be lost have lots of information about Jesus Christ. Jesus says that the reason we should come to Scripture is that we might come to Him and have life.

The apostle John tells us that he wrote his gospel record for that very reason. Listen to his words in Jn 20:30-31. "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." We see, in the Scriptures, a picture of Jesus. And we read the Scriptures that we might do more than know

about Jesus. We want to know Him, whom to know is life eternal. We read the Scriptures in order that we might draw closer to Jesus.

Conclusion

What have we learned this morning? What does Jesus teach about the Scriptures? We have discovered 3 important truths this morning from the teachings of Jesus. First, the Scriptures are the Word of God. We need to receive that Word by faith. Secondly, the Scriptures are a defense against the enemy. That's why we need to hide God's Word in our hearts, so when the enemy comes upon us like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against him. And a third truth that we have learned about the Scriptures is this: the Scriptures are a testimony about Jesus Christ. They point to Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Savior. And when we read the Scriptures, we should read with the prayerful desire to draw closer to Jesus Christ. We want to know Him, to have an intimate relationship with Him, whom to know is life eternal.

I want to challenge you this morning to make a commitment to **spend time with the Word of God**. Does that sound like a worthwhile challenge? **Spend time with the Word of God**. Now some are already doing that. Praise God. Keep doing what you're doing. Some may be thinking, "Pastor, I've been reading the Bible regularly, maybe even every day, but I feel like I've just been gathering information." If that's you, then I want to challenge you to read the Word of God daily with a different focus: read the Word of God daily with the prayerful desire to draw closer to Jesus. And there may be some, perhaps even many, listening to my voice right now who are not reading the Bible at all. I want to encourage you to begin some systematic reading of the Scriptures. Begin with the Gospel of John. Pray for the gift of faith to receive

what you read as the Word of God. That Word will become a light to your feet and a lamp to your path. That Word will provide a defense against the enemy. But more than anything, that Word will reveal to you a picture of Jesus. And as you read that Word of God by faith, pray that you will be drawn closer and closer to Jesus, your Savior. Not all of your questions will be answered. But we're not saved by having all of the answers. Praise God. We are saved by knowing Jesus, our Savior and Lord, whom to know is life eternal. And when we find Him, when we enter into intimate fellowship with Him, the purpose of all Scripture will be fulfilled.

Bulletin insert:

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES

1. The Scriptures are _____.
2. The Scriptures are _____.
3. The Scriptures are _____.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - PART 3
What Jesus taught about the Sabbath
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Mark 2:27-28
Subject: What Jesus taught about the Sabbath
Complements: it was made for man
Exegetical idea: Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man.
Homiletical idea: **The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing.**
Purpose: To invite my hearers to experience the blessing and healing on the Sabbath that the Lord of the Sabbath intended.

Introduction

If I were to tell you this morning that I have decided to do away with the 6th commandment, you'd probably say to me, "Derek, that's ridiculous! You can't just do away with one of the Ten Commandments." What if I told you that I was part of a very important group of people who made that decision? You'd most likely say, "That doesn't make any difference. No person, or group of people, has the authority to change the commandments of God."

And I would certainly agree with you. But there is one commandment which is under attack today. It's the 4th commandment which says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Many Christians are being taught that you don't have to "remember" it any more. The Sabbath commandment is no longer binding for New Testament Christians.

Some point out that Jesus never specifically instructed His disciples to continue to observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath after His resurrection. They also point out that when referring to the commandments, Jesus never mentioned the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

So why do Seventh-day Adventist Christians continue to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Word of God teaches in the fourth commandment? Why have a remnant of Christians down through the ages continued to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?

This is the third sermon in our series entitled “What Jesus taught.” We’ve considered what Jesus taught about salvation and what Jesus taught about the Scriptures. If you missed either of the first two sermons in this series, you can ask for a CD of the sermon in the church lobby or watch the sermon video on our church website at www.forestlakechurch.org.

This morning we want to consider what Jesus taught about the Sabbath. If we were to limit our comments to the two issues raised in the introduction, we might simply say this: While Jesus never specifically instructed His disciples to continue to observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath after His resurrection, He never instructed them to stop doing so.

Throughout His life, Jesus had remembered the Sabbath day. In fact, Jesus sought to help people to understand the true meaning of the Sabbath. The religious leaders of His day had mutilated the Sabbath. They had surrounded the Sabbath commandment with a myriad of man-made rules and regulations. The Sabbath had become a burden. Jesus wanted people to discover the true meaning of the Sabbath. And His prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, recorded in Matt 24 makes it clear that Jesus expected His followers to be still remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy. He encouraged His followers to pray that their flight would not be in the winter or on the Sabbath. Matt 24:20

What about the fact that Jesus never mentioned the fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” when quoting the commandments? The incident that is being referred to here is found in Luke 18:20. Jesus is talking to the rich young ruler, and He says,

“You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother.” Jesus quotes the 7th commandment, the 6th commandment, the 8th commandment, the 9th commandment, and the 5th commandment, in that order. Can that text be used to prove that Jesus no longer expected New Testament Christians to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? I think not. It’s true that Jesus doesn’t quote the 4th commandment. But neither does He quote the 1st commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” Or the second commandment, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image.” Or the 3rd commandment, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.” Or the 10th commandment, “You shall not covet.” Would it be sound logic to argue that all of those commandments are no longer binding as well? I don’t think so. Jesus Himself said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” Matt 5:17

Jesus never even hinted that the seventh day Sabbath was abolished, replaced or done away with. What then did Jesus teach about the Sabbath?

Jesus taught that the Sabbath is a time of blessing. Our loving Creator provided the Sabbath for our benefit, as a time of blessing. Listen to the words of Jesus, recorded in Mark 2:27. “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day had turned the Sabbath into a burden. I have no doubt that they had good intentions. After all, they wanted to protect the edges of the Sabbath, and how the Sabbath was observed. But by a multitude of man-made regulations, they had turned the Sabbath into something that God never intended. They had mutilated God’s blessing and made it a burden. And so when

they saw the disciples of Jesus plucking heads of grain as they walked through a grain field on the Sabbath, the Pharisees said, “They are breaking the Sabbath. That’s not allowed! According to our man-made supplements to the fourth commandment, that’s a transgression.”

And Jesus confronts this distorted view of the Sabbath. He says, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath was blessed and sanctified for man’s benefit. And if anyone understood the true purpose of the Sabbath, it was Jesus, the Son of God. The apostle John tells us, speaking by the Holy Spirit, that all things were made by the Word, that Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. That means that the eternal Son of God, who came into the flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, He was the One who created the Sabbath as the concluding act of His creative work. That’s why He could claim to be Lord of the Sabbath day, as recorded in Mark 2:28. And according to Jesus, the Sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath is to be a time of blessing, not a burden.

The Sabbath is a time of blessing because it is a time to remember who we are and who God is. For six days we are laboring and doing all our work. And if it were not for the blessing of the Sabbath, many of us would be working 7 days a week. Am I speaking the truth this morning? We need the Sabbath. Not as some kind of additional obligation that complicates our already hectic lives. We need the Sabbath as a time of blessing to remember who we are and who God is.

We need the Sabbath to remember that there is more to our past than cosmic coincidences.

We need the Sabbath to remember that there is more to our present than making a living.

We need the Sabbath to remember that there is more to our future than AARP and

retirement.

The Sabbath is a time of blessing because it reminds us each week who we are and who God is. But the Sabbath is not only a time of blessing for us as individuals. The Sabbath is also a time of blessing as we allow God to bless others through us. Listen to the words of Jesus, recorded in Matt 12:12. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." You say, "Why in the world would Jesus need to say that?" Because the Pharisees saw even works of kindness and mercy on the Sabbath as a transgression of the Sabbath commandment. But Jesus says, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." The Sabbath was made for man. It is intended to be a time of blessing, not a burden. If you see someone in need, there is no better time to let God bless that person through you than on the Sabbath day. Why? Because the Sabbath is a time of blessing. That's what Jesus taught.

I remember one Sabbath day that I returned home from church to our house in Wescoesville, PA. Our neighbors, the Henry's were committed Christians, members of the Moravian church. As I drove into my driveway, I noticed that Michael Henry was standing in front of his car, looking under the hood. That's usually a sign that there's a problem! So I called out to him, "What's the problem, Mike?" "Oh," he said, "it's my battery. It's dead!" I stopped my car, went into my garage, got my jumper cables, jumped back into my car, and drove over into his driveway. Within a few minutes, we had hooked up the jumper cables, and his car was running!"

As I waved goodbye, he said, "I really appreciate your help. I wasn't going to ask you because I know it's your Sabbath. I appreciated his sensitivity. I wouldn't have helped him remodel his bathroom on Sabbath! But he was in trouble. He needed help. And I was happy to

lend a helping hand because the Sabbath is a time of blessing. It's a time when we are blessed and when we can extend blessing to those around us. So bless someone today. Visit someone who is in the hospital. Invite someone who is lonely to take a walk with your family. Share your lunch with someone. And do so knowing that you are experiencing the true meaning of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a time of blessing. That's what Jesus taught.

But Jesus taught that the Sabbath is not only a time of blessing. The Sabbath is also a time for healing. As you read the gospel record, you discover that Jesus intentionally healed people on the Sabbath day. He knew that His actions would arouse opposition from the religious leaders. He knew that they would accuse Him of being a Sabbath-breaker. He could have waited until another day. But Jesus could not allow the truth about the Sabbath to be distorted by man-made traditions. The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing.

Let's look at three miracles that Jesus performed on the Sabbath day. As we examine these stories, we will learn a great deal about what Jesus taught about the Sabbath. The first miracle we are going to consider is recorded in John 5. I'm reading from John 5, beginning with verse 1. "....."

Why do you think that Jesus asked this man to take his sleeping mat with him? Can you imagine what that sleeping mat smelled like after lying on it year after year after year? Why, I would have said, "Just get up and walk. Forget about the sleeping mat." But Jesus said, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." Why do you think that Jesus gave those instructions? I think we find the answer at the end of John 5:9. What does the Word of God tell us? "That day was the Sabbath." Jesus was deliberately drawing attention to this healing. Didn't He know that the religious leaders would criticize Him? Didn't Jesus know that they would accuse Him of being a

Sabbath-breaker? Of course He did. And that criticism came almost immediately. Look at John 5:10. “The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath: It is not lawful for you to carry your bed.” They totally missed this opportunity to praise the name of the Lord. After all, this man had been a paralytic for 38 years. And he had been healed. But they totally missed that. All the religious leaders could see was a transgression of their Sabbath regulations. But Jesus performed the miracle in spite of their opposition. He healed this man on the Sabbath day in spite of the criticism that He would receive. Why? Because Jesus could not tolerate a distorted view of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given by God as a blessing, not a burden. The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing.

Let’s look at a second miracle that Jesus intentionally performed on the Sabbath day. The story is recorded in Luke 13, beginning with verse 10. “.....”

It is not only lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. It is not only lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath is the time when healing ought to occur. There’s no better time than the Sabbath to be made whole. That’s what Jesus taught. And so Jesus actually got upset when people distorted the true meaning of the Sabbath. On one occasion, Jesus entered a synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he noticed a man present who had a withered hand. The story is recorded in Mark 3. If you read between the lines, it looks like a set up. The religious leaders have actually placed this man in the congregation as a trap. We pick up the story in Mark 3:2. “.....”

What a tragedy! These religious leaders totally missed the true purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given as a time of blessing and healing. But they had mutilated the Sabbath and made it into a burden. And because Jesus didn’t yield to their myriad of man-made

regulations, they were ready to kill Him. What a tragedy!

But it's also a tragedy if we miss the true purpose of the Sabbath. We could also fall into the trap of remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy just because "it's the right thing to do." We could fall into the trap of remembering the Sabbath day to keep holy just to fulfill some legalistic obligation. And we will be totally missing the true purpose of the Sabbath. Jesus wants you to experience the Sabbath as a time of blessing and healing. Do you need blessing and healing in your life today? There is no better time to experience healing than on the Sabbath day. Because the Sabbath is a time of blessing healing.

That's one reason why it's good for us to gather together for worship every Sabbath day. We could worship God by ourselves. We could go to the mountains or to the desert and spend time alone with God, remembering who we are and who God is. And there are certainly times when that is meaningful and appropriate. But it's also good for us to gather together for worship on the Sabbath day. Because as we worship together, we can experience blessing and healing.

- We can experience blessing as we worship the Lord together in spirit and in truth.
- We can experience blessing as we fellowship together as the body of Christ.
- We can experience blessing as we bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- We can experience healing from our stresses and anxieties as we cast all of our cares upon Him because He cares for us.
- We can experience healing from our sense of loneliness and alienation as we gather together in Jesus' name.
- We can experience healing for our emotions and our bodies as we come in faith and

claim the precious promises of God.

Yes, the Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing. That's what Jesus taught about the Sabbath, both by word and deed.

Conclusion

That's was God's original plan in giving us the Sabbath. He never intended that the Sabbath would be a burden. He didn't create the Sabbath, bless it, make it holy, and then create people who He could compel to observe it! No. God created the Sabbath as a time of blessing and healing. That's what Jesus taught.

Is there anyone here in church this morning who is in need of a blessing? Is there anyone here in church this Sabbath morning who is in need of healing? Then there is no better time than now. This is the Sabbath day, a time of blessing and healing. And Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath....Jesus, the Son of God, who has taught us the truth about the Sabbath, is here by His Spirit to bless and to heal. Is there anyone here this Sabbath day who needs that blessing, who needs that healing that Jesus can give.

I hear the words of Jesus ringing in my ears. Is it not right that this person should be set free on the Sabbath day? Who needs freedom today? Who needs the blessing of God today? Who needs healing today? The Sabbath is a time of blessing and healing. If you need to experience God's blessing, God's healing in a special way on this Sabbath day, I want to invite you to raise your hand toward heaven. The Lord sees every hand that is raised in faith today.

We are going to close this service with a special season of prayer. We want to thank God that He has given us the Sabbath for our blessing and healing. If you would like special prayer this morning that the blessing of God would rest upon your life, that the healing of God would rest upon your life according to His will, I want to invite you to join us here at the front of the

church. I have asked some of our elders to join me here as we pray for God's special blessing upon your life. Just come now. Let this Sabbath be a time of blessing and healing for you.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - PART 4
What Jesus taught about death
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Jn 11:1-14, Rev 1:17-18
Subject: Why we do not need to be afraid of the sleep of death
Complement: because Jesus holds the keys of Hades and of death.
Exegetical idea: We do not need to be afraid of the sleep of death because Jesus hold the keys of Hades and of death.
Homiletical idea: **You do not need to be afraid of the sleep of death because Jesus has the keys!**
Purpose: To help my hearers to understand the teaching of Jesus regarding death and to give them the assurance that they do not need to fear death because Jesus holds to the keys of death and the grave.

Introduction

Several years ago, my wife and I traveled to Tennessee for a family vacation. Bodil took her faithful suitcase with her, that we have affectionately named “Buford.” As you can see, Buford is a fairly large suitcase. It can hold almost everything that you might need for a vacation, even if you are planning to stay for several months! Trust me. We had everything we needed. There was only one problem. When we arrived in Tennessee we discovered that we had forgotten the key to the suitcase. Buford was locked, and without a chisel or a chainsaw we weren’t getting it open! And the key was 2000 miles away!

That experience reminded me of another incident with a key that occurred many years ago when our youngest son Jonathan was just a little boy. Jonathan acquired a very special key. In fact, he still has it. Here it is. He bought this key at the gift shop at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, PA. He was told that this was the key to the lock on the massive front door of Independence Hall. He only paid \$5 for the key, so he was sure that it wasn’t the original. But

Jonathan's inquisitive mind was curious to discover whether or not it was indeed an exact replica of the original. So when no one was looking, Jonathan and his daddy sneaked over to the massive front door of Independence Hall, put this key into the old metal lock, and turned the key! To our amazement, it worked! This key locked and unlocked the massive front door of Independence Hall. Well you can only imagine how important Jonathan felt at that moment. He had the key. He had the key to Independence Hall! He was holding the key to Independence Hall right there in his hand. And he felt important!

The Bible talks about some keys that Jesus holds in His hand that are much more important than the key to our large green suitcase or even the key to Independence Hall. We are going to learn about the keys that Jesus holds in His hand as we consider together what Jesus taught about death.

This is the fourth sermon in our series entitled "What Jesus Taught." If you've been here from week to week, you've heard us discuss what Jesus taught about salvation, what Jesus taught about the Scriptures, and what Jesus taught about the Sabbath. If you missed any of these sermons, you can pick up a complimentary CD in the lobby or watch the sermons on our church website at www.forestlakechurch.org.

This morning, we want to consider what Jesus taught about death. I'd like us to begin with a strange fable that Jesus told. It's a fable about two men, a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. This story is recorded in Luke 16:19-31. "....."

During the time of Jesus, the Jews recounted numerous fables and legends about imaginary situations. And many scholars suggest that this story was one of those popular fables. But why does Jesus tell this strange parable? Is His intention to teach doctrine, to tell the truth

about death, or to make some other point using a popular fable of His day? Well, let's look at the story more closely. There are three main characters in the story: a rich man, a poor beggar named Lazarus, and Abraham. There is no evidence from the story that the rich man was an unrighteous or ungodly man. We are simply told that he was rich, he lived in luxury. There is also no evidence in the story that the beggar Lazarus was a godly man, a man who placed his faith in God. But the story goes on to tell us that both of these men died. The beggar is carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, which was a popular concept among the Jews. The rich man ends up in Hades, a Greek word which simply means "the grave." Hades is the equivalent of the Hebrew word "Sheol." And here we meet our first problem with taking this story as a literal description of what happens when we die. Because no where in the Old or the New Testament is Sheol or Hades described as a place of torment. But this story describes Hades as a place of torment.

What's even more troubling if we read this fable as a literal description of what happens when we die is the fact that the place of the saved, Abraham's bosom, and the place of the lost, Hades, are so close to each other that it's possible to see what's happening from one place to the other. And it's even possible to talk to people across the gulf. Does that sound like heaven to you? A place where you could hear the screams of tormented loved ones forever and ever? Jonathan Edwards, the famous American preacher argued that the agonies of the damned enhance the bliss of the redeemed. But I can't agree. The agonies of the damned enhance the bliss of the redeemed? Does that make sense to you?

I believe that it is a mistake to base any doctrine on this or any other fable. Would it really bring any relief if Lazarus dipped his finger in water, reached across the gulf, and cooled

the tongue of this rich man who is in fiery torment? The whole story just doesn't make sense if it's a literal description of what happens when we die. So what is the point that Jesus is trying to make? I believe that the answer is found in Lk 16:26. "....." Once death comes, we have no more opportunity to change. Jesus has just told 4 others parables about a lost sheep, a lost coin, two lost sons, an unjust steward who just lost his job, and then he tells this fable about a lost opportunity. The rich man missed the opportunity to make wise choices before his life came to an end. Because once life comes to an end, there is nothing can be done to make any changes. That's a lesson that we can learn from the fable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Now if it's dangerous to build any doctrine about what happens when we die based on this fable which obviously cannot be taken literally, where else in the gospel record do we find what Jesus taught about death? I want to draw your attention to another story, also about a man named Lazarus, but this story is true. It's recorded in John 11. Let's begin reading with Jn 11:1-3 "....."

Lazarus, and his two sisters, Martha and Mary, were friends of Jesus. Jesus stayed in their home in Bethany when He was in the vicinity of Jerusalem. How do you think that the disciples expected Jesus to respond to this urgent appeal? I agree. They expected Jesus to stop everything He was doing and head straight to Bethany. But He didn't. The Bible tells us in Jn 11:4-6, "....."

While they are on their way to Bethany, Jesus shares some important teaching about death. Look with me at Jn 11:11. "....." Jesus chooses His words very carefully here. Jesus is perfectly aware of the fact that Lazarus is not taking a nap. He knows that Lazarus is dead. But Jesus specifically chooses to use the word "sleep" to describe Lazarus' condition in

death.

Do the disciples understand what Jesus is saying? No. Listen to their reaction, recorded in Jn 11:12-14. “.....” Jesus spoke of death as a sleep, and His followers understood when the redeemed would be raised from the sleep of death. Notice the words of Jesus to Martha and Martha’s response, recorded in Jn 11:23-24, “.....” Undoubtedly, Martha had heard the teaching of Jesus concerning death, recorded in Jn 5:28-29. There Jesus says, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.”

What Martha failed to comprehend was the fact that Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life, can also bring about a special resurrection prior to the resurrection at the last day. So Jesus says to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” And even Martha gets the idea that something out of the ordinary is about to happen. We continue the story in Jn 11:38-43. “.....” I want you to notice that words of Jesus here. What does He say? Lazarus.....come forth! Lazarus....come out! Notice, Jesus doesn’t use the language of the fable in Luke 16. He doesn’t say, “Lazarus, come down from Abraham’s bosom,” even though that was a common Jewish belief. Jesus doesn’t say, “Lazarus, come up from the place of torment in Hades.” What does Jesus say? “Lazarus, come forth.” And the Word of God tells us in Jn 11:44, “He who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”

Have you noticed that after his special resurrection Lazarus doesn’t say anything about

his experience during the previous four days? He doesn't say, "O, let me tell you what it was like in Abraham's bosom!" He doesn't say, "O, thanks for delivering me from the torment of Hades." Why? Because he wasn't up somewhere or down somewhere. He was in that rock tomb. That's why Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth!" Jesus was waking Lazarus up from the sleep of death. "Ah," you say, "if Lazarus was in the sleep of death, how did he hear Jesus call him?" That's a good question. And the answer is simple. Lazarus heard Jesus call him in the same way that all who are in the graves will hear the voice of Jesus at the resurrection on the last day. The word of Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, the word of Jesus is so powerful, that in the milliseconds that it takes for the sound to leave his mouth and travel to the place where Lazarus lies in the sleep of death, a miracle of recreation occurs. Remember, Lazarus had been dead for four days. Martha told Jesus that her brother's body was already stinking. His body was decomposing. But the word of Jesus is so powerful, the word of Jesus is so full of life, that a miracle of recreation occurs as soon as He speaks, and by the time those words reach the ears of Lazarus, the resurrection is already occurring. Lazarus hears the words of His Savior, and just as he has obeyed Jesus during his life, so now Lazarus continues to obey Jesus, and he comes forth from the tomb. Jesus, the Life Giver, woke Lazarus up from the sleep of death.

The apostle Paul testifies that the Lord Jesus also shared the truth about death with him. Listen to Paul's testimony to the believers in Thessalonica. 1 Thess 4:15, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep." What sleep is Paul talking about here? The sleep of death. Paul continues, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." Paul

tells us that he receives this truth from the Lord. The dead in Christ are asleep. But they will not sleep forever. Someone ought to say Hallelujah out there! The dead in Christ will not sleep forever. They will awake from the sleep of death when the Master calls them. They will hear the Savior's voice when He calls.

You see, my brothers and sisters, the precious truth that Jesus taught about death is not only that death is a sleep, but Jesus also taught that He holds the keys of the grave and of death! Listen to the words of Jesus, recorded in Rev 1:17-18. "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death."

You don't need to be afraid of the sleep of death because Jesus has the keys! Jesus has the keys! When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and was laid in the garden tomb, Satan thought that he had finally won. Jesus was dead. But Satan forgot one very important point. Jesus has the keys of death and death's domain. And early Sunday morning, Jesus responded to His Father's call. He unlocked death's door and came forward as more than a Conqueror. Oh death, where is now your sting? O grave, where is now your victory? Jesus conquered death and death's domain. Jesus has the keys. And Jesus not only conquered death and death's domain for Himself. He conquered death and death's domain for all who believe in Him.

You do not need to fear death anymore. You do not need to fear the grave anymore. You believe in Jesus. You have received Jesus. And Jesus has the keys. Even if you fall asleep in death before our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ returns in glory, you won't stay sleeping forever. You won't be locked up in the tomb forever. Jesus has the keys. "Do not be afraid," Jesus tells us. I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives and was dead, and behold, I am

alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of death.”

That’s why Jesus says, “Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” Jn 11:26 You may take a short rest in the sleep of death. But that’s not the end of the story. Praise the name of the Lord. That’s not the end of the story. Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”

Do you believe in Jesus, the Son of God. Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord? Then death has lost its sting. The grave has lost its victory. You don’t need to be afraid of the sleep of death because Jesus has the keys! Those keys are more important than the keys to any suitcase! More important than key to the massive front door at Independence Hall. Jesus has the keys of Hades, the grave, and of death. In Jesus, death has lost its sting. The grave has been defeated. You don’t need to be afraid of the sleep of death because Jesus has the keys!

CHRIST AROSE

by Robert Lowry (1826-1899)

Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior,
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain:

Up from the grave he arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Savior,
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

(Refrain)

Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior;
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!

(Refrain)

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - PART 5
What Jesus taught about the judgment
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Jn 5:19-24
Subject: What Jesus tells those who accept Him as the Son whom the Father has sent
Complement: they will not come into judgment but have passed from death into life.
Exegetical idea: Jesus tells those who accept Him as the Son whom the Father has sent that they will not come into judgment but have passed from death into life.
Homiletical idea: **For those who belong to Jesus, the judgment is good news!**
Purpose: To assure my hearers that for believers in Jesus Christ, the outcome of the judgment has already been settled. The judgment simply identifies all of those who belong to Jesus.

Introduction

When I was 12 years old, I had to stand before a judge. And let me tell you, I was shaking in my shoes. My knees were knocking together. Sweat was trickling down my back. Do you get the picture? And I hadn't even done anything wrong! I was simply called into court because someone had stolen my bicycle from the parking lot of the local swimming pool. But I can still remember that traumatic experience. I was only about this tall, and the judge was sitting way up above me, behind a huge wooden bench. He looked like a massive eagle perched up in a tree, ready to swoop down on me. And he had a big wooden mallet close to his right hand which could obviously be used to smite me on the head! It wasn't a very pleasant experience.

Many of us have grown up with similar thoughts of anxiety and fear about the final judgment. We have heard the messages of the three angels recorded in Revelation 14 which begin with the words, "Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). We have heard the solemn warning of the apostle Paul that "we must all appear

before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). It all sound very troubling, doesn't it?

This morning I want to consider with you what Jesus taught about the judgment. I believe that some of us may be pleasantly surprised to discover that what Jesus taught about the judgment is good news indeed!

Jesus clearly taught that there would be a day of judgment. Listen to His words recorded in Matt 11:21-24. “.....” There is no doubt from the teaching of Jesus that there will be a day of judgment. Jesus even taught that “for every idle word men (and women) may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” Matt 12:36. You say, “Pastor, that doesn't sound like good news. That doesn't sound encouraging. What is the good news that Jesus taught about the judgment?”

Let's begin our search for the good news that Jesus taught about the judgment in the gospel of John, chapter 5. John 5:22. These are the words of Jesus concerning the judgment. Jesus tells us, “For the Father judges”.. how many? “The Father judges no one. Who then does the judging? Let's read on. “But has committed all judgment to the Son.” The first piece of good news that Jesus teaches about the judgment is that He is the judge.

Remember my anxious encounter with that judge who was perched up behind that huge wooden desk? Do you think I would have reacted differently if I had known that judge personally? Do you think I would have experienced different emotions if that judge had been my friend? Would it have made any difference if that judge had made an “I love you” sign at me, winked at me with a sparkle in his eye, and smiled at me? Of course it would have made a

difference. I wouldn't have been shaking in my shoes if I had know that the judge was my friend, that he cared for me, that he loved me.

Do you get my point? Jesus tells us, "There's something very important that I want to tell you about the judgment: I'm the judge. I'm in charge! I render the verdicts. That's good news my friends, what do you say? Our precious Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loves us and gave Himself for us...He is the judge! The Father has committed all judgment to the Son.

Jesus tells a story about the time when the Son of Man will perform that work of judgment. And in that story, we learn another piece of good news that Jesus shares about the judgment. That story is recorded in Matt 25, beginning with verse 31. "....."

Now we need to be careful that we don't read too much into this story. This story is not teaching us how to be saved. We have carefully studied what Jesus taught about salvation in part 1 of this series on "What Jesus taught." We are saved when we look in faith to Jesus as our Savior and Lord. This story is not addressing the issue of HOW we are saved. But we can learn what happens in the final judgment. What does happen in the final judgment? The answer is simple. Jesus, the Son of Man, Son of God, the One to whom the Father has committed all judgment.....In the final judgment, Jesus identifies those who belong to Him. It's true that those who belong to Him have certain identifying characteristics. But that's not the reason they belong to Jesus. Rather, those characteristics reveal that they do indeed belong to Jesus. This story of the sheep and the goats teaches us that in the judgment, Jesus will identify those who belong to Him. Jesus knows those who belong to Him.

Back to my experience with the judge when I was 12 years old. Can you imagine how I would have felt if that judge had got me confused with the juvenile kleptomaniac who stole my

bike? That would have been devastating. Fortunately, even that earthly judge knew who was who. And I want to assure you today that Jesus, the righteous heavenly Judge know who is who as well. Jesus knows those who belong to Him.

Do you see this bird cage? It's full of birds. One of those birds belongs to I need a volunteer to guess which one belongs to Thank you, brother. Which one belongs to? Wrong. Try again. Wrong again! Come up here! Which one belongs to you? How did you know that? "Because it's mine!"

Do you get the point. Jesus knows those who belong to Him! I'm so glad that Jesus oversees the final judgment, and not someone else, aren't you? I hope I don't offend you this morning, but I'm so glad that you're not the one who identifies those who belong to Jesus. And I'm sure that you are equally glad that I'm not the one who identifies the ones who belongs to Jesus. Because man looks on the outward appearance, but where does God look? On the heart. If some of us looked at the woman crumpled up at Jesus' feet, we might have told her to go over and stand with the goats. But Jesus recognized that this beaten and bruised, used and abused woman at His feet was a lamb of His flock. I'm so glad that it's Jesus who identifies all those who are His, aren't you?

If some of us looked at the crooked IRS agent who appeared to have more money than morals, we might have told him to go over and stand with the goats. But Jesus recognized that this undersized wheeler and dealer up in the tree was a lamb of His flock. I'm so glad that it's Jesus who identifies all those who are His, aren't you?

If some of us looked at the foul-mouthed fisherman who seemed to change his allegiance more speedily than a quick-change artist, we might have told Peter to go over and stand with the

goats. But Jesus recognized that this feisty and flawed fire cracker was a lamb of His flock. I'm so glad that it's Jesus who identifies all those who are His, aren't you?

What have we learned so far from the teachings of Jesus about the judgment? First, Jesus is the judge. And that is good news! What do you say? Our precious Savior who loves us and gave Himself for us, who conquered death for us, who holds the keys of Hades and of death, who ever lives to make intercession for us, who soon will come to take us home, our precious Savior, Jesus Christ, is the judge. Secondly, we have learned that in the judgment, Jesus will identify those who belong to Him. If that's true, and I believe that it is, then the key issue is not how much we have done or even what we have done but who we belong to! If we belong to Jesus, our lives will bear the fruit of that connected with the Lord of Life. Amen. We won't have to try to be a little more "Christian." When we belong to Jesus, our lives will bear witness to that living connection with Him. And in the judgment, Jesus will identify all of those who belong to Him.

But there's a third piece of good news that Jesus teaches about the judgment. And it's the best news of all. In fact, it sounds too good to be true. But Jesus said it, and I believe that Jesus speaks the truth, don't you? This third piece of good news that Jesus teaches about the judgment is found back in John 5:24. Jesus tells His hearers on that Sabbath day in Jerusalem, and He also tells us today, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life.." You say, "Now, that is good news!" We can know with certainty that through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord we HAVE everlasting life! Amen. But Jesus isn't finished. "He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

Jesus says, “Those who hear My word....shall not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life.” What is the Word that we hear in order to have everlasting life and in order to not come into judgment? Is it a particular word that Jesus spoke, like the word LOVE, or FORGIVENESS, or PEACE? No. It’s not a particular word. It’s not even a particular combination of words. Jesus gives us the answer to our question. What is this Word that we need to hear? Look with me at John 6:47. “.....” The Word that we must hear is not a what, it’s a WHO. Jesus is the Word. We must hear the Word and believe in the One who sent Him. John tells us that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jn 1:1-2,14 When we hear that Word, when we receive Jesus for who He is, the One who is full of grace and truth, sent from the Father, and believe in the One who sent Him, we have everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but have passed from death into life.

The KJV translates Jn 5:24 as follows, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into **condemnation**; but is passed from death unto life.” But it’s the same Greek word $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omega$ that’s used in Jn 5:22 “ For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all **judgment** unto the Son.” It’s the same Greek word $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\chi\omega$ used in Jn 5:26-27, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute **judgment** also, because he is the Son of man.”

The translators of the KJV may have had difficulty with what Jesus was saying in Jn 5:24, but to be consistent, since the same Greek word is used in Jn 5:22, v24 and v27, it should

be translated consistently in each place. I believe that the NKJV and many other translations are correct when they translate the words of Jesus in Jn 5:24 as follows: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

Listen carefully to what I’m about to say. For the person who belongs to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled. For the man or woman, and boy or girl who belongs to Jesus, to use an American expression, the judgment is a done deal. You have already passed from death to life. Is that good news?! For those who belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled.

Do you remember the most difficult exam that you ever took in school—the one where you did really poorly? I do. It was the next year after my encounter with the judge. I was dropped into a physics class, and I was already a year behind when I started. I didn’t have a clue what was going on. It was like a different language. When I took the final exam at the end of the year, I knew I was in trouble. It still makes me wince when I think about that exam. I got a 37%, which needless to say, was not a passing grade. I crashed and burned! I wiped out! Do you remember the most difficult exam that you ever took? And you didn’t do that well? Now just imagine that a week before the test, the teacher said to you, “I’ve got some bad news and some good news for you. There is a difficult test next week. Only one person has ever passed it. That’s the bad news. (Hold up frowning Smiley). But here’s the good news. I’ve already taken the test for you and you made an A! (Hold up the happy Smiley).

Isn’t that good news? And the good news about the final judgment is this: for those who belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled. We have already passed from

death into life. We don't have to be anxious. We don't have to be afraid. Jesus, our precious Savior, who loves us and gave Himself for us—He is the judge. And in the judgment, Jesus will identify all those who belong to Him. And for those who belong to Him, the outcome of the judgment is already settled. That, my friends, is good news.

Perhaps there is someone here who is thinking, “Wait a minute! How is that possible that those who belong to Jesus can pass through the judgment that easily? How can a just and holy God just pass over all of our sins which are worthy of condemnation and death? The Gospel prophet Isaiah answered that question 700 years before the Son of God came to this earth. Speaking of the Messiah who was to come, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the prophet Isaiah writes, recorded in Isaiah 53:5-6, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

When you belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled. It's true that the day of judgment is coming. It's true that we will all have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But we have discovered some good news this morning as we have considered what Jesus taught about the judgment. First, Jesus Himself is the Judge. I can't think of a more loving, a more compassion, a more merciful judge than Jesus, can you? Jesus Himself is the judge. Jesus, who loved us so much that He gave His own life to save us. Jesus, who ever lives to makes intercession for us. Jesus, who is soon to come again to receive us to Himself that where He is there we may be also. Jesus is the judge! That, my friends, is good news.

A second piece of good news that we've learned about the judgment is this: Jesus tells us

that in the judgment, He will identify all of those who belong to Him. He is the judge. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son. And Jesus knows those who belong to Him. Not one of those who belong to Jesus will be passed by. Jesus will identify all of those who belong to Him.

And the best news of all that Jesus taught about the judgment is this. Not only is Jesus Himself the judge, not only will He identify all those who belong to Him, but for those who belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled. It's a done deal! We don't have to wonder what the outcome of the judgment will be. Jesus says, "He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment but has passed from death into life." That's why, **for those who belong to Jesus, the judgment is good news!**

So let the day of judgment come! Let Jesus, the Righteous Judge take His seat. Let Him identify all of those who belong to Him. We do not need to be anxious. We do not need to be afraid. Jesus knows all of those who belong to Him. He knows those who hear His voice. We have already passed from death into life. In Jesus Christ, our case has already been heard. We shall not come into judgment. For those who belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled. **For those who belong to Jesus, the judgment is good news!** That's what Jesus taught about the judgment. And so I say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." What do you say?

I'm wondering if there is someone here today who has been afraid of the final judgment. Maybe it's because you have never personally accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord. And you know that if you have to stand alone in the day of judgment, you are in deep trouble. You realize that you need a Savior. You need Jesus. You need to know that He will be your Judge. You

need to know that He will identify you as one of those who belong to Him. You need the assurance that because you belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled. Do you long for that assurance today? Then I want to invite you to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord, and believe in the One who sent Him. And when you do that, the Bible says, you can not only know that you have everlasting life, but you can also know that you will not come into judgment but have passed from death into life. Remember, **for those who belong to Jesus, the judgment is good news.**

And for those of us who have received Jesus as our personal Savior, but we've been anxious about the judgment, accept the good news that Jesus taught about the judgment. There is no need to be anxious or afraid about the judgment. **For those who belong to Jesus, the judgment is good news.** Jesus is the Judge. He will identify those who belong to Him. And for those who belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled.

What Jesus taught about the judgment

1. Jesus Himself is _____.
2. Jesus will identify all those who _____.
3. For those who belong to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment _____.

Props:

Illustration #1 (standing before a judge): A large wooden chair with arms and a wooden gavel.

Illustration #2 (Jesus knows those who belong to Him): A group of animals or birds, probably in a cage. (I was thinking of a hamster or a parakeet). One of those belongs to a child/adult in the congregation, and that individual must be able to clearly distinguish which one belongs to him/her. I will ask a volunteer to identify (guess) which one belongs to that person and then ask the owner to tell us which one really belongs to him/her.

Illustration #3 (For the one who belongs to Jesus, the outcome of the judgment is already settled): Physics textbook, or any thick textbook. Inside the front cover of the textbook, place two pieces of cardstock with "Smileys" on them. One is a dull color with a frowning Smiley. The other is a bright yellow with a happy Smiley!

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT - PART 6
What Jesus taught about the His return
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Matt 24:36-25:13,
Subject: What Jesus told his disciples about his return as He taught on the Mount of Olives
Complement: that His coming was certain
that He wanted them to be ready.
Exegetical idea: As Jesus taught on the Mount of Olives, He told His disciples that His coming was certain and that He wanted them to be ready.
Homiletical idea: **Jesus wants you to be ready!**
Purpose: To reassure my hearers regarding the certainty of the second coming of Christ and to encourage each one to be ready by trusting fully in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Introduction

Do you remember that last time you moved from one home to another? It's an incredible amount of work, isn't it? But one of the benefits of moving is that you rediscover precious treasures that have been "lost" for years. Do you know what I'm talking about? We found one such treasure when we were packing for one of our recent moves. Here it is! Now I realize that this inexpensive cassette tape doesn't look like much of a treasure to you. But to my wife and I, it's worth its weight in gold. On this tape is a recording of our two sons, Christopher, then age 6, and Jonathan, age 3. They are singing a song that Christopher learned in Kindergarten. Listen to the words:

One day I'll look up and see Jesus coming down for me,
sitting on a cloud so white with His holy angels bright.
O then, I will shout and sing, "Glory! Glory! Glory!"

He has come our heavenly King, Glory! Glory! Glory!

The second coming of Jesus in glory is one of the most precious truths of the whole Bible. In fact, it's such good news that someone might even shout "Glory! Glory! Glory!" I want to share with you this morning what Jesus taught about His return. This message is divided into 3 parts: the good news, the bad news, and the most important news.

First, the good news that Jesus taught about His return. The return of Jesus in glory is certain. What did I say? The return of Jesus in glory is CERTAIN. What words of Jesus come to your mind when you think about the certainty of His return in glory? Jn 14:1-3. That's the text that first came to my mind as well. Jn 14:1-3. Jesus is speaking to His disciples in the upper room, and what does He say? "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I WILL COME AGAIN.... and receive you to myself that where I am there you may be also." Amen! That's the promise of Jesus. "I will come again." The return of Jesus in glory is certain.

And that is not the only passage of Scripture where Jesus teaches about the certainty of His return in glory. We are going to focus our attention this morning on some of the comments of Jesus from the Mount of Olives, just a few days before His crucifixion. In this conversation with His disciples, Jesus has much to say about the certainty of His return in glory. Let's start with Matt 24:27. "For as lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also WILL the coming of the Son of Man be." The glorious return of Jesus, like lightning flashing from the east to the west, is CERTAIN. Nothing secret about His return in glory. Nothing tentative. The return of Jesus in glory is certain.

Look down at Matt 24:30. “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they WILL SEE the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Then look with me at the words of Jesus in Matt 24:44. “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man IS COMING at an hour when you do not expect Him.” We’ll come back to this verse later in the sermon. But I want you to notice once again the certainty here. The Son of Man is coming. And that’s good news, what do you say? Because when Jesus comes, as we learned in a previous sermon in this series, when Jesus comes, He’s going to wake the dead. The dead in Christ are going to rise first, when the Master calls. Amen? Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. That’s going to be a glorious day. What do you say? Yes the coming of Jesus in glory is certain, and that’s good news.

For several years, my wife worked as a nurse practitioner in an OB/GYN practice. During that time, she interacted with a lot of pregnant women. Those mothers didn’t know the exact day that their babies would be delivered. Some of them didn’t even know that they were pregnant when they came in for their first check-up. But as the weeks and months of the pregnancy progressed, it became more and more evident to those mothers that a baby was on its way. They could see the signs.

(Interview Deborah and Tracy) Let me illustrate. “Are you about to have a baby?! How do you know that you are expecting a baby? What are some of the signs that you have a baby that is about to be delivered?”

We may not know all of the details exactly. But this much we do know. The coming of baby_____ is certain!

And Jesus tells us, “My return in glory is certain. You can see the signs. You can know that the day is approaching. Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Even though no one knows the day or the hour, you can know that the return of Jesus in glory is certain. And that, my friends, is good news!

But there’s also some bad news that Jesus taught about His return in glory. It’s found in this same portion of Scripture, recording the teachings of Jesus from the Mount of Olives. Look with me at Matt 25:1-13. It’s a parable about that Jesus gave to teach about His return. It’s a parable about a wedding. “.....” (Matt 25:1-4)

Tell me, what does this wedding represent? The return of Jesus in glory. And who do the 10 virgins represent? The professed followers of Jesus. How many of these professed followers of Jesus are looking forward to the coming of the Bridegroom? All of them. How many of them have lamps? All of them. How many of them have oil in their lamps? All of them. All of them, at some point, have experienced the blessings of God. All of them have received the anointing of God’s Spirit. But not all of them will be ready for the Bridegroom’s coming. And not all of the professed followers of Jesus will be ready for His return in glory.

Let’s read on. Matt 25:6-12. “.....” What percentage of the professed followers of Jesus in this parable were not ready for His return in glory? 50% That, my friends, is bad news. Now I realize that it is not wise to build our eschatology, our understanding about last day events, on a single parable. We would not be wise to make two lists of those attending church here at Forest Lake Church, one list for those who will be ready for the return of Jesus in glory, with 50% of the membership on it, and an equal list for those who will not be ready. Personally, I’m praying that every single man, woman and child in this church family would be

ready when Jesus returns in glory. Isn't that your prayer too? But while we don't want to read too much into this parable, one lesson is very clear. Not all of those who profess to be followers of Jesus will be ready for His return in glory. Would you agree with me on that? In this parable, 50% of the professed followers of Jesus are not ready. In the parable that follows, the parable of the talents, 33% of the servants are not ready. Both of those statistics are bad news. 50% not ready. 33% not ready. It is clear from the teaching of Jesus about His return that many of the professed followers of Jesus will not be ready for His return in glory.

I heard a story some time ago about 3 men who were standing on the platform of a train station. They were obviously waiting for a train because they were surrounded by several suitcases. But as they waited, they became engrossed in conversation. They seemed oblivious to anything happening around them. After a few minutes, the train pulled into the station. Passengers disembarked. New passengers boarded the train. But none of these three men seem to notice. They simply continued their intense conversation. Finally the whistle blew, and the train began to move. Immediately, there was a flurry of activity on the platform. Two of the men grabbed the suitcases and began to run. The train was moving now. The two men ran, threw the suitcases in through an open door and jumped on board. It was a close call. The third man stood motionless on the platform, staring at the departing train. All of a sudden, he burst into laughter. The station master was watching this whole scenario, and he couldn't contain his curiosity. So he walked over to the laughing stranger and said, "Sir, I'm puzzled. I watched this whole scenario unfold. I saw your two companions running for the train. I watched as they barely got on board before the train pulled out of the station. And then I saw you standing here. And all of a sudden, you started laughing. I just don't understand." The laughing stranger

composed himself, looked at the station master and said, “I can see that the situation didn’t look very humorous to you, sir. But you see, those two men came to say goodbye to me. I was the one who was supposed to get on the train!”

We laugh. And rightly so. Those 3 men became so distracted that none of them ended up in the right place. Two men caught a train that they weren’t supposed to catch, and the intended traveler was still standing on the platform. But I think that you would agree with me that it’s no laughing matter when you think about people not being ready for the return of Jesus. It’s no laughing matter when you think that people you love could miss the train that’s bound for glory. I don’t want to be like that man who is left standing on the platform, do you?

What have we learned so far from the teaching of Jesus about His return. First, the good news: The return of Jesus in glory is certain. And I’m so thankful for that good news, aren’t you? But then comes the bad news. Many of those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ will not be ready for His return in glory. Many of those who call Jesus “Lord” will miss the train that’s bound for glory. That’s the bad news. Now if we ended the sermon right here, we would all go home depressed.

But we’re not going to end here. If you remember at the beginning of this sermon, I told you that I’ve divided the teaching of Jesus regarding His return into 3 parts: the good news, the bad news, and the most important news. We’ve heard the good news that Jesus taught about His return. The return of Jesus in glory is certain. We’ve heard the bad news: many of those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ will not be ready for His return in glory. So what’s the most important news? What’s the most important news that Jesus taught about His return? It’s found in this same portion of Scripture, beginning with Matt 24:36. “.....” Notice, the

question is not whether Jesus will return in glory. That's certain. The question is WHEN. And Jesus says, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Let's read on. Matt 24:37-42. "....." Even though the generation living at the time of the flood was warned by Noah for 120 years that the end was near, the flood still came unexpectedly. So Jesus tells us, WATCH. You may be aware of the fact that some Christians have taken Matt 24:40-41 as a description of a "rapture" of the saints, when the righteous are taken, and those who are not ready are "left behind," given a second chance to repent and be saved. But nothing could be farther from the truth. Look at the parallel passage in Luke 17, beginning with verse 26. "....."

There is no second chance for those who are left behind. They are destroyed, just as it was when judgment came upon Noah's generation and Lot's generation. Where the dead body is, there the vultures will fly. So what is the most important news that Jesus teaches about His return in glory? Look again at the words of Jesus recorded in Matt 24:44. This is the most important news. What does Jesus tell us? "Therefore, you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming.... He is coming, church. The return of Jesus in glory is CERTAIN. For the Son of Man is coming in an hour when you do not expect Him." Friend, Jesus wants you to be ready.

When we lived in the mountains of southern California, we became accustomed to wild fires during the dry summer months. One of those wild fires came within half of mile of our house. It's was actually quite a fascinating sight to behold. The fire swept up the south side of the ridge, right over the top, and was on it's way down to where we live. But the firefighters were well prepared. The fire engines were strategically positioned. And then came the air

support. Small twin engine planes. Helicopters. And then the huge mother of all planes that dropped the fire retardant. While I stood outside, gawking at the pyrotechnic display, my wife was busy in the house. She gathered all of our important papers. She carried 15-20 family photo albums and put them in the trunk of the car. She got a change of clothes for everyone. While I was sight-seeing, my wife was preparing. I was preoccupied. She was ready!

There's a lesson in that story. Don't be preoccupied by things of lesser importance. Don't be preoccupied with the helicopters and the tabloid headlines. The most important news that Jesus gives us about his return in this: BE READY. Friend, Jesus wants you to be ready for His return in glory. Did you hear what I said? Jesus wants you to be ready for His return in glory. That's the bottom line. That's the most important news that Jesus taught about His return.

You say to me, "Pastor, I want to be ready. I believe the return of Jesus in glory is certain. I don't want to miss the train that's bound for glory. I want to be ready. But how can I BE READY?" That's a good question, isn't it? How can a person be ready? The answer is found in the parable of Jesus that we just studied. Matt 25:12. To those who were not ready, Jesus said, "I do not know you." You don't have a personal relationship with Me. Remember the words of Jesus in His great prayer of John 17. "This is life eternal, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son, has life." 1 John 5:11-12 And that relationship with Jesus will be manifested in loving obedience to His commands. According to Jesus, "Not everyone who calls Him "Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of our Father in heaven. That's what Jesus taught. He said, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do the things I say?" A saving relationship with Jesus Christ is a life-changing experience!

If you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, you have everlasting life. You are READY for His return in glory. That's the most important news of all! Because Jesus wants you to be ready. Listen to the rest of the song that my son Christopher learned in Kindergarten.

Gabriel will His trumpet blow, wake the sleeping ones below

They in beauty shall arise to meet Jesus in the skies.

O then, I will shout and sing, "Glory! Glory! Glory!"

He has come, our heavenly King. Glory! Glory! Glory!

My brother, my sister, Jesus wants you to be ready for that day! Jesus wants you to be ready! Don't you want to join in the chorus that shouts, "Glory! Glory! Glory!"? You can have that assurance today. If you are trusting Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, you are ready for His return in glory. His return in glory is certain. That's what Jesus taught. And while it's a sad reality that many of His professed followers will not be ready for His return in glory, Jesus wants you to be ready. Will you trust Him fully today as your Savior and Lord? You may have walked with Jesus for 50 years, or this may be your first day in church. But will you trust Him fully today as your Savior and Lord? Jesus wants you to be ready for His return in glory. Jesus wants you to be ready.

Remember that my wife and I found this treasure as we were getting ready to move. (Hold up the cassette). This is worth it's weight in gold. I want to suggest that we're also getting ready for a move. Not east or west, but up! Amen? And we have found some treasure that is worth it's weight in gold. Jesus wants you to be ready for His return in glory. Jesus wants you to be ready.

Appeal:

I have a very specific appeal this morning in response to this message. I believe that many, if not most, of the people here this morning have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You have the assurance that you are known by Jesus and ready for His return in glory. But as you were listening to the story of the man left standing on the platform of the train station, perhaps you thought of someone you love who does not know Jesus, someone you love who is not ready, someone you love who might miss the train that's bound for glory. I want to give you an opportunity to bring that person before the Lord in prayer this morning. But more than that, I want to invite you to ask God to do whatever He needs to do in your life so that His love can flow through you to that person. Are you willing to make that commitment? If so, I want to invite you to join me here at the front of the church as we pray. Someone might be thinking, "Pastor, I need to make a commitment to Jesus Christ myself. I want Jesus to know me. I want to be ready for His return in glory. Then you come too. Come now, and let's pray together.