



KISS THE FEET

Part 100 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 24:36–53 | November 27, 2011

Luke 24:36–53

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

INTRODUCTION

Pastor Mark here in Jerusalem. We are actually on the Mount of Olives, surrounded by a beautiful number of olive trees and finding ourselves in a very special place; a place that is set aside for Jesus and the worship of Jesus as God. It's actually a Catholic church, monastery, and compound that is set aside in the middle of what is otherwise the Muslim quarters. And curiously enough, tradition tells us that this was the place from which Jesus, after his resurrection, ascended into heaven; hence, the name of the church here, The Church of the Ascension. I felt this was an appropriate and insightful place to read to you Luke 24:50, the final three verses of Luke's gospel that also then establish where he picks up the story in the book of Acts.

“Then he,” that is Jesus, “led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them,” like a father over his family. “While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him.” Imagine people on this mountain, perhaps, as tradition would hold, even in this place, standing here being prayed for by Jesus and then seeing him physically, bodily ascend back into heaven, where he had come down from as God. They worship, they celebrate, they sing. “And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem,” just down the hill, “with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.” This place is dedicated to the remembrance of the ascension of Jesus, and the highest point is an amazing spire that goes heavenward to remind us of the ascension of Jesus Christ.

LUKE #100

I was nineteen years of age when God saved me and I became a Christian, and I had no idea what I was doing. So I met with a pastor, a great pastor, and I said, “I'm a new Christian. What should I do now?” That was my question. And he said, “Well, you need to read the Bible.” I said, “Okay.”

So I went home and read the Bible, the whole thing in a couple of weeks. And I came back to him. I said, “Well, I did that.” He said, “You did what?” I said, “I read the whole Bible.” And he looked surprised. Apparently, you're supposed to take a while, but I didn't know. I thought, “Well, okay. I'm supposed to read it. It's a big book; I'd better hunker down and get this done.” So I just read the whole Bible, and I came back, and I said, “Okay, I did it. I read the whole Bible. What do I do now?” He said, “You need to study it.” I said, “Yeah, because I do have questions. The first time through, it didn't all make sense.” [Congregation laughing]

I said, “So, what should I do now?” He said, “Pick a book of the Bible. Just pray about it and see if one sort of grabs your heart, and then just study that book of the Bible until you feel like you have a good handle on it. Get other resources to help you understand it. And when you have an idea that, ‘Yeah, I think I know the basic idea of this book, and I could explain it to people, and it makes some sense to me,’ that's what I want you to do.” And I said, “Well, how long will that take?” He said, “Well, a short book could take a few months. A long book could take many, many, many months.”

I said, “Well, what do I do after I’ve studied a book in the Bible?” He said, “Pick another one and keep doing that until you die.” [*Congregation laughing*] That was some really good advice, so that’s what I started doing. I picked a short book at first to give myself a little confidence and momentum. I didn’t want to start with Leviticus, or Psalms, or Isaiah. And then I could tell all the other freshmen, “I have studied an entire book of the Bible—with a chapter in it.” So I picked a short book and got started and found I really enjoyed studying books of the Bible.

Well, when it came time to start Mars Hill Church some fifteen years ago, I kind of just kept that first pastor’s really good advice. We’re just going to go through books of the Bible. We do do topical series on occasion. We’re going to do Real Marriage starting in January, but the bread and butter here has always been preaching through books of the Bible, and today we conclude the book of Luke.

The book of Luke finishes today with sermon 100 from Luke 24:36–53. I’ve titled it, “Kiss the Feet.” You’ll see why at the very, very end. And this is the twenty-first book of the Bible that I have had the great privilege of teaching all the way through here at Mars Hill Church. And so I want to celebrate that. I want to praise God for that. I want to thank you for that, and I want to show you what has happened since we started Luke, real briefly.

And the prevailing wisdom today is do short books of the Bible, or do short series from the Bible, because people have short attention spans and you can’t grow a church if you yell at people for long periods of time, going through a lengthy book of the Bible, to which we say, “Ha ha!” [*Congregation laughing*] The power is in the Word of God, and we have seen God bless his Word. I’ll show it to you.

We started Luke with Luke sermon 1, back on September 20, 2009. On that Sunday, we had 8,571 people in attendance. That’s 7,422 adults and 1,149 cute little people. And we had nine locations and twenty-six services. Our Mars Hill website was getting 12,000 visitors a day. TheResurgence.com, our leadership engine, was receiving 5,000 visits a day.

Fast forward to the end of Luke, as we’re now in sermon 100. 12,338 people in attendance last week. That’s 10,403 adults and 1,935 children. Look at how many kids we’re adding. If children are a blessing, we’re really blessed, right? Praise God for all the kids. We’ve now got fourteen locations spread across four states, thirty-three services, and triple the visits to the website in total. So we’ve gone to 15,000 visits a day at Mars Hill, and we’ve gone to 26,000 visits a day at The Resurgence, which now makes it the number one Christian leadership website on the entire Internet and one of the most trafficked websites of any Christian subject or topic.

So here’s what God has done as we’ve been in Luke. Five more locations; that’s five new Mars Hill churches, seven new services, almost 3,000 new adults, almost 800 new children, 3,767 more people a week, and 30,000 more people a day just hitting our websites to get Bible teaching about Jesus. Good news? Praise God. [*Congregation applauding*]

JESUS IS ALIVE

So we’re going to finish Luke. I hope you’re ready. Turn in your Bibles or find on your app Luke 24:36–53. How will the great book of Luke, the biography of Jesus, end? Four big ideas. The first is Jesus is alive.

And here’s where we find it in the storyline of Luke. Jesus was promised throughout the Old Testament to be coming. He was born of a virgin. He lived without sin. He was a preacher, a teacher, a traveler, a healer. He ultimately was put to death via crucifixion. He died and was buried. He died in our place for our sins, as our Savior. Three days later, as was promised in the Old Testament and from the lips of Jesus, he rose from death. He rose from death. Jesus alone has conquered sin, and Jesus alone conquers death, which is the wage for sin.

What we see today is what Jesus does and says after his resurrection. So, Luke 24:36–43. “As they were talking about these things—” So the number of people who were followers of Jesus at this point is small. It’s not large. Dozens of people, not even hundreds. And they’re talking about the life and the death of Jesus. Imagine someone you love very dearly died, and it’s a few days later, and you and your friends and family are gathering, and you’re sort of recollecting their life and mourning their loss. Something happens. “Jesus himself stood among them—”

Can you imagine that? Sometimes we just read the Bible like, “Oh, yeah, they were hanging out, and then Jesus showed up.” Imagine that. Imagine you had a funeral for your friend or family member, and the group of you is, “Oh, do you remember the good old times when he was alive?” He was like, “Howdy!” That would be amazing, right? They freak out a little bit, and we can’t necessarily blame them.

“And he said to them, ‘Peace to you!’” which had to be a bit of a shock. “But they were startled and frightened—” Yeah. Can you imagine that? You saw him die, and then he shows up. So, they “thought they saw a spirit.” “Are we hallucinating? Is this an angel? Is this a demon? Is this a *Scooby Doo* episode? What is happening? It looks like it’s Jesus, but he was dead. He can’t be alive. Dead people don’t come back to life.” One does. That makes him unique. Amen?

“And he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your heart? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.’” He says, “It’s really me. Here are the crucifixion scars. I’m the one who was murdered. I’m back to life. I’ve conquered sin and death. I’ve done it. I’ve achieved it. I’ve accomplished it.”

“Touch me, and see—” “You don’t think I’m physically here? Come on, give me a hug. Give me the knuckles. I’m here. It’s me.” Jesus rose physically from death. Jehovah’s Witnesses say he rose spiritually. He rose physically. Some people say he didn’t rise literally and bodily, but he rose figuratively in our hearts. He rose physically. Any time a guy says, “Here are the scars. You want to wrestle? I need some breakfast. Give me a hug,” he’s alive. He’s alive. You don’t even need to go to college to figure that out. He’s alive.

He goes on, ““For does a spirit have flesh and bones, as you see that I have?”” He’s really physically alive. Some of you say, “That’s unusual.” We know! Ha ha, we agree! That’s why we’re so excited! This has never happened before, and it’ll never happen again. This makes Jesus unlike anyone and everyone in the history of the world. Because, see, sin results in death, and Jesus died for our sin, but death could not hold him because he had no sin, and so he conquered sin and death for us.

“And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’” You know he’s physically alive when he really wants breakfast. And who can blame him? Sleepless night, beaten, dehydrated, murdered, in a tomb three days, gets out, goes for a long walk. He needs breakfast. Amen? It’s the most important meal of the day! He needs breakfast.

And this is very sad. What comes next is disappointing, and that is that Christians are cheap, and we see it here. Look what they serve him for breakfast after he atoned for the sin of the world! He has not eaten in days! “They gave him a piece of broiled fish.” That’s sad. They should have given him bacon and sausage and ham and they should have said, “Not only have you conquered death, you have fulfilled the law. The old covenant is no longer binding. Happy breakfast pork product.” That’s what they should have done and got him coffee to the glory of God and the joy of all nations. Instead, broiled fish. Very disappointing.

But Jesus, being humble, “took it and ate it before them.” That’s how humble Jesus is. Were it I, I would want huevos rancheros with chorizo. I would want green chile salsa. I would want coffee and as much pork product as possible. Jesus ate broiled fish. And what we see here is Jesus is really alive. They’re touching him, they’re speaking with him, they’re hugging him, they’re feeding him. He is very much alive, and he is going to appear to crowds upwards of five hundred at a time over the course of some forty days, including his own family and enemies, we read in 1 Corinthians 15.

Here’s what we learn. Number one, sin is not victorious. Jesus is. The resurrection of Jesus is the victory of Jesus. Sin is not victorious. Jesus is. Number two, death is not victorious. Jesus is! How many of you have lost someone that you love? How many of you are approaching your own death? How many of you fear your own death or the death of one you love? Death is unnatural. Death is contrary to the way that God, the Living God, created the world that we dwell in. When God finished his work, he declared it to be very good. And because of sin, things have gone very wrong. And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that death is our enemy, and Jesus is our victory.

What this means, practically, is that for those of us who trust in Jesus, our future is with him, and our future is like his; that we will die, but ultimately we will rise just as he died and he rose, and we will be with him forever together in the kingdom of God, where the effects of sin are no more. There will be no suffering. There will be no sin. There will be no shame. There will be no sadness. There will only be Jesus and his people together forever.

And so what this means is that we, who trust in Christ, we know the future. We do not know the specifics of our future, but we know with guaranteed assurance our eternal future. We will rise to be with Jesus; that for us, death no longer holds that terror over us that it once did because to live is Christ, Paul says, and to die is what? Gain.

And what can happen is, when someone dies, we become uncertain what to say. And people with well-meaning intentions say untrue things, like, “I’m sure they’re in a better place. Well, you know, at least now their suffering has ended.” Not always true. Not everyone is in a better place and not everyone’s suffering has ended. For some people, apart from faith in Christ, they’re in a worse place, and their suffering has intensified, which is justice.

But the good news is this: None of us has to be mastered by sin. None of us has to experience that final eternal death, which is punishment and wrath from the hand of God. We all can receive forgiveness of sin, eternal life, the righteousness of Christ. And then we can know that, for us, this world is as close to hell as we will ever get. And for the unbeliever, this is as close to heaven as you will ever get. For the believer, it will only get better. For the unbeliever, it will only get worse.

It’s not enough just to admire Jesus, to examine Jesus. We want you to love Jesus, to know Jesus, to trust Jesus, to be a friend of Christ, that you would overcome sin by his work and that you would overcome death by his work. And, of course, we show all of this in baptism: that Jesus died and he rose for us, and we will die and we will rise to be with him.

So number one, I have good news, Mars Hill. Jesus is alive! Jesus is alive! We don’t worship a dead man. We don’t just follow an example. Maybe like these disciples, we have those moments when we are mourning and remorseful and grieving and sad. And Jesus comes to us and says, “Peace, I’m alive, I’m here. You’re not alone, and you’re not on your own.” That Christ is with us, that Christ is for us, that Christ is alive.

THE BIBLE IS TRUE

Number two, Jesus says that the Bible is true, that the Bible is true. Luke 24:44–46, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything,’” because all Scripture is God-breathed, “everything written about me in the Law of Moses,” Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, “and the Prophets,” that’s the bulk of the Old Testament writers and speakers, “and the Psalms,” which is the worship hymnal of the Old Testament and the wisdom literature that is connected to it, “must be fulfilled.”

The Word of God must be fulfilled. It must be fulfilled, that the Word of God is living and active; that the Word of God does not return in vain. It accomplishes what God sends it out to achieve. And Jesus looks at them, and he says, “I’m alive because that’s what the Bible told you would happen.”

““Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead . . .” But again, they wouldn’t understand that if God didn’t open their understanding. So we then previously read that “he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” If you want to understand the

Scriptures, you need to ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind to understand what the Bible is about. The Bible is not about you; it's about Jesus. But it is for you because he loves you.

This is a big distinction at Mars Hill, and I don't want to, in any way, speak negatively of other churches and leaders. Every church that loves Jesus, we want them to flourish and grow. But if you are visiting, if God should call you elsewhere, please, because I love you, only be under teaching that opens the Bible and talks about Jesus.

The whole point of the Bible is Jesus. We hit this last week. Remember that sermon? It took a long time. I won't repeat all of those points. If you want to find it online, you can, but the big idea of the Bible, according to Jesus, is that it's about him; that ultimately he is the hero, he is the Savior, that the Bible is one story about one Savior: Jesus Christ. And that means any time the Bible is taught or a topic from the Bible is taught, it is not appropriately taught unless Jesus is made much of.

That's exactly what Jesus teaches us. And so he is here saying that for thousands of years, through dozens of authors, God sent a succession of witnesses to promise and proclaim the coming of Jesus Christ. The purpose, the central primary purpose of the Old Testament, was to prepare people for the coming of the second member of the Trinity: the Son of God, Jesus Christ. That's why it's promised in the Old Testament he would be born of a woman, he would be born of a virgin, he would be born in Bethlehem, he would be born before AD 70, that he would live without sin, that he would perform miracles, that he would die through crucifixion, that he would be buried with the rich in his death, that he would resurrect three days later, and that he would save sinners from the eternal wrath of God, and that he alone would ascend into heaven, and that he would take the people of God with him, and that he would rule and reign as the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and that one day he would return to establish a kingdom that would never end.

That is our Jesus, and that's exactly what the Bible promised. And all of that has come to pass and we are awaiting the fulfillment of the final prophecies of Jesus, and we know with all certainty that the God who was good for the promises of the first coming of Jesus will assuredly be good for the promises of the Second Coming of Jesus. Amen? Amen!

And that includes our resurrection from death. That includes our eternal life with God, together as his people. And some of you have a very faulty view of heaven. It is that we will be spiritual immaterial beings. We won't. We will rise in physical bodies like Jesus did. Ultimately, heaven is not your eternal home; it is a place that your soul will pass through on your way to your eternal home: the kingdom of God. And there will be a day when Jesus calls forth your name, if you are in him, and your soul will reenter your body. And as Jesus rose from death, you will rise from death to live in the new creation without sin and its effects, as God originally intended.

Heaven will not be boring. The kingdom of God will not be boring. It will be glorious. It will be fantastic. You will know people. You will live in a physical body. You will eat and drink as Jesus did. You can hug those whom you've missed, because they died in faith. What we see in Jesus is the future that we have with Jesus. It's amazing.

My kids have asked me this. "When I get to heaven, Daddy, when I get to the kingdom of God, could we play ball? Can we go swimming? Can we hug? Can we hang out?" Yes, you can do anything but sin. There's plenty of room for pleasure, friendship, reunion, gladness, and joy in the kingdom of God, and we will not sin because sin and its effects will have been lifted from us and the world that God made, and that is the teaching of the book that God wrote.

SO WE MUST GET THE GOSPEL OUT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER

Number three, because Jesus is alive, because the Bible is true, we must get the gospel out by the Holy Spirit's power. Everybody needs to know about Jesus! Everybody. That's exactly what he says. Luke 24:47-49. ". . . and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed," or preached, "in his name," whose name? Jesus' name "to all nations."

What about the ones that have a different religion? Yes. What about the ones who disagree? Yes. Why? Because the ascended Jesus is Lord over all. All people, all times, all tribes, all tongues are under his sovereign rule, and everyone needs to know him. Isn't that unloving to tell them they're wrong? No. It's unloving to allow them to worship a false god and then die to stand before the real God. We tell people about Jesus as an act of love, "beginning from Jerusalem," the place of his resurrection.

"You are witnesses of these things." The Bible is written by those who were eyewitnesses to the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus.

"And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you." That is God the Holy Spirit. "But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." What he says is this message has to be proclaimed; this gospel, this good news that God loves us, that he came for us, that he lived the life that we have not lived, that he died the death that we should've died, that he rises to conquer the enemies we cannot defeat. His name is Jesus! It's all finished. He's alive and well. That the nations need to know, that everyone needs to know. And he says it must be proclaimed.

And let me say this. This is at the heart of conviction at Mars Hill Church. The good news, the gospel of Jesus is not something that can be shown; it must be said. It cannot be shown; it must be said because the good news is about the life, the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus. Yes, we believe in justice. Yes, we believe in mercy. Yes, we believe it is good to seek the physical healing of people. Jesus healed them physically. Yes, we believe it is good to feed the hungry. Jesus fed the hungry. Yes, we believe it is good for those who are marginalized and poor and outcast to be loved and cared for as image-bearers of God, and Jesus did that and taught that. But in and of itself, that is not enough to save.

People don't need just good deeds, though they are helpful. They need good news. They need to learn about Jesus. And one of my great concerns is the

cowardice among some who would say, “I don’t want to talk about Jesus. I just want to love and serve people, and I will assume that somehow they will make a connection to Christ.” They won’t. That’s our job. Not just our job, that’s our joy. That’s our joy.

There was a saint many years ago, and there’s a saying that is attributed to him that some would say perhaps he did not say, but it was, “Preach the gospel at all times, and use words when necessary.” False. Preach the gospel. Preach the gospel. Tell people about sin and a Savior. And yes as we love and yes as we care and yes as we give and yes as we serve we can then say, “This is on behalf of Jesus. He loves. He serves. He gives. He is good. He is God. Anything that you appreciate in my affection for you is a reflection of him.”

And so I’m not saying that good words and good deeds are to be divorced, but I’m saying that good deeds without good words can lead to damnation. And if we want people to experience salvation, we can’t just do good deeds. We must tell the good news that Jesus died for sin and he rose for salvation and that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but by him.

He says that we should preach repentance and forgiveness, and it says it “should”—very important word—“should be proclaimed.” Then it hangs in the air as to whether you and I will actually do so. “In his name,” it says, we’re to be talking about Jesus, not just God or Lord or Christ or Savior or Creator or some word in which a lot of meaning gets imported that is not from Scripture—talking about Jesus and talking about the love of God and the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

REPENT OF SIN

And he says it is to be about repentance of sin and forgiveness of sin. Here’s the problem: sin. People don’t talk about that. We like to blame others for our sin: parents, culture, genetics, personality type, experiences, woundedness. We like to say things like, “Nobody’s perfect.” What we don’t say is everybody’s a sinner. We like to excuse our sin: bad day, hard times, extenuating circumstances. We like to deny our sin: “I don’t think so.” We like to hide our sin.

Jesus says repent of sin. We’re all sinners by nature and choice: thought, word, deed, motive. Sins of commission: we do what we ought not do. Sins of omission: we do not do what we ought do. I am a sinner. I’m as guilty as any of you.

There is only one who is without sin: the Lord Jesus Christ. It even troubles me when I hear teachers say, “You should be like Jesus.” Well, there’s one thing very different. He never repented of his sin. It’s something that we need to do all the time because we’re sinners and he’s not. When you acknowledge that sin is the problem, you’re beginning to understand the root cause of all the sorrow, all the strife, all the suffering in the world. It’s sin. It’s selfishness, it’s pride, and it’s me-ism.

1. CONVICTION

We who are sinners are invited here by the Lord Jesus to repent. Repentance is not getting caught; it’s coming clean. And repentance is four things. It is first conviction. Conviction comes from the Holy Spirit. This is where God devastates your conscience. You know that you’re wrong. You know it. Sometimes you could see it on the face of the person that you just obliterated in a conversation. Sometimes you could just look at the shipwreck that is your life and realize, “I have done this.” It’s conviction.

Sometimes conviction comes from reading the Word of God, or it can come from a conversation with the people of God or hearing the preaching of the Word of God. God convicts us. Don’t stifle that. Don’t call it depression. Don’t categorize it as a bad thing. Yes, there is an unhealthy depression, but there’s also conviction, which is not to destroy us but to compel us to Jesus. And there should be a moment in that conviction, a season where it’s not just conviction, but then it leads to confession, which is the second step.

2. CONFESSION

Confession is where we talk to God about it. “Lord, you already know, so I’m not telling you anything you don’t know, but here I am talking to you because I need it. I need to talk to you about this. Here’s what I’ve done,” or “Here’s what I’ve failed to do, and here’s the mess I’ve made.” And, “God, I want to talk to you about that.” It’s confession, and it’s also confession to other people. The Bible says to confess your sins to one another. “I’m sorry for what I did. It’s my fault. I have no excuse. I’m not blaming you. Don’t say it wasn’t a big deal. God died for it. It’s a big deal.”

3. CONTRITION

Conviction, confession, contrition, this is where you feel it. This is where, emotionally, you become fragile and broken and humble and grieved. “I did it. I can’t—I can believe I did that.” See, we should never say, “I can’t believe I did that.” We should always say, “I can believe I did that.”

4. CHANGE

And then that culminates in change. “By the grace of God, I’m going to change. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I’m going to change. By the help of God’s Spirit, and God’s Word, and God’s people, I’m going to change, and I don’t want to do this anymore. Who I’ve been, I want that person to die because Jesus died. And I want to come forth as a new person right now, because Jesus is alive and that’s what he does.”

He makes us new creations, new people. We get born again. It’s a new heart. It’s a new mind. It’s new desires. It’s new actions, new attitudes, new passions, new pleasures; not perfect, but new, being perfected through the course of life. It’s repentance.

How many of you don’t really repent? You don’t really ever talk to God about your sin? You may complain to him about other people’s sin, but you don’t repent of your sin. Or how many of you don’t repent well to others? You don’t just go to them and say, “I am sorry, it was wrong. Please forgive

me.” Let me say that that is so powerful.

It starts when you’re young. Parents, model this for your children. You parents should never have a culture in your household where your children never hear you repent of your sin, because they’ll just grow up to be religious kids who talk about everybody else’s sin but not their own, because they will have learned that from their mom and dad. Dads, you want to know how to be the spiritual leader of your home? Repent. When you’re wrong, tell the kids, “I was wrong. I am sorry. Please forgive me.”

It’s powerful. Because sin leads to death. It kills marriages. It kills families. It kills friendships. It kills Community Groups. It kills churches. So the sin will either kill the relationships, or Jesus’ death will allow the sin to be put to death so that the relationship between God and the person and God and other people can continue.

I tell you, I had two of the more encouraging conversations of recent memory in this past week. And I won’t divulge all the details, but it was two people who had sinned. They had sinned. And one person understood that they were sinning against their spouse in a way that was not yet devastating, but was escalating. And people who loved them brought conviction from the Holy Spirit and started talking to them about it, confession. And there was contrition on their behalf. “Oh, you’re right. Look what I’m doing. This is really dangerous.” And they changed in the grace of God.

So I got to call them this week. “How are you doing?” “Good, Jesus has forgiven me. My spouse has forgiven me. Our Community Group has forgiven me, and I’m grieved by where I was, but I’m so glad for where we’re going, and there’s hope, and I’m not alone because I’m loved.” Isn’t that wonderful?

Another person I met with this week. There was sin in their life. Sat down, had a meal with them, looked them in the eye. “Okay, I love you very much. I have a few hard words. I don’t know how you’re going to take them. Here’s what I see.” This person responded very humbly, very kindly. And at one point, they said, “Thank you.”

And in this conversation, they basically said in their own words, “I want to be like Jesus, so thank you for helping me be more like him.” I started crying, they started crying; two guys at breakfast, publicly. [*Congregation laughing*] I thought, “Wow, okay, there’s a conviction there.” And they said, “I want to repent.” Praise God.

So when we were done, it was actually a deeper friendship. You know why? Jesus died, so the friendship didn’t have to. They even gave me a hug. I’m not a big hugger, but I got a hug. You know that Jesus was involved when sin ends in a hug, right? You know that Jesus was involved.

FORGIVE SIN

And so when Jesus says, “Go out and preach repentance,” he’s inviting people to experience a whole new way of life because for sinners, we’re supposed to repent, and then he says also to preach forgiveness. Forgiveness is what the victim does; repentance is what the guilty do. So when we sin, repent. When we’ve been sinned against, forgive. That’s the only way you get reconciliation in relationship. You don’t get full reconciliation unless the sinner repents and the victim forgives. And in forgiving someone, you are allowing them to live without the consequence and punishment of their sin.

Now, this doesn’t mean that if they break the law, they don’t have to go to jail. It doesn’t mean if they’ve stolen, they don’t need to repay. But it is not choosing bitterness. It is not holding it against them. It is not constantly bringing it up, particularly if they have repented and you have forgiven. What you’re saying is, “I don’t need to punish you because Jesus was already punished. I don’t need you to suffer because he suffered in your place.”

That’s why Ephesians 4 says to forgive others, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Dear Christian, we cannot say, “God, please forgive me, but I refuse to forgive them.” That’s the height of hypocrisy. “I want forgiveness, but I don’t grant forgiveness.” There is no such Christian way.

And some of you need to really hear this. When you’re suffering, when you’re lonely, when it gets hard, and the bad news comes, you will be inclined, because of the enemy’s whisper in your ear, to think this thought: “God is punishing me.” He’s not. God never punishes you if you are in Christ, because Christ has already been punished. It would be a travesty, an injustice, for Jesus and you to both pay for the same sin. To be sure, when we sin, sometimes we reap what we sow. Sometimes we just live in a sinful, fallen world, and we’re not on the other side of the resurrection yet. And sometimes, Psalms, Proverbs, and Hebrews say that like a father corrects a child, so God will use circumstances to correct us, but never to condemn us because there is now no condemnation in Christ.

You need to know that so that when you sin, you can run to Jesus because, “Against you only Lord God have I sinned,” says the psalmist, and you should run to others and come clean, instead of getting caught. And when you have been sinned against, you can extend forgiveness. And as you do, you’re echoing the words of Jesus who, from the cross, said to those present and us today, “Father,” what? “forgive.” There is so much power in forgiveness.

And I feel inclined of the Holy Spirit to say—I don’t know who this is for, but I feel like this is for some of you—you know there’s power in forgiveness, so you’ve withheld it. And, in so doing, you’re in sin and you are doing to someone else what God in Christ has not done to you, and that is withheld forgiveness.

If you are someone who is withholding forgiveness, you are doing something that is demonic. You are not allowing that person to experience the same kind of love that you experience from Jesus. It’s an evil thing.

I want you to hear that when Jesus says, “Go tell everybody they can repent and forgive, it’s good—” what? It’s good news because some of you are devastated in your conscience and your guilt and your shame, and you need to know if you bring that to Jesus, he forgives. And some of you have

been sinned against, and you are wounded and broken and damaged by those offenses, and you need to know that if you don't forgive, you will become bitter, you will become self-righteous, and you will become sad. And in forgiving someone, you're allowing them to repent; and if they don't, you're allowing God to deal with them, and you are freeing yourself of the pressure of being the Lord, and you're leaving it up to the real Lord.

BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

And so what Jesus says is everybody needs to know this. And he says, "But don't go tell the whole world just yet." There are just a few dozen people. They've got the nations of the earth. This could be an overwhelming job description, right? They're like, "Okay, we need to get a map. That's right, they haven't invented maps yet. Wow, this is going to be a lot. We need to go tell the earth about Jesus."

How many of you feel woefully inadequate for what God has called you to be and do? If you don't, you're not paying attention! Right? What he says is, "You can't go do what I'm asking you to do, you can't be who I'm asking you to be, so wait, and I'm going to send someone else. I'm going to ascend back into heaven, and then we, the Father and I, are going to send the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, and he is going to empower your life. He is going to give you spiritual gifts. He is going to bring to you new life, new power to live as a new person."

So the Christian life, friends, it's not what we do for God. It's what God does for us, what God does in us, what God does through us. That's the Christian life. You cannot serve God faithfully, you cannot serve God fruitfully apart from the presence, and the power, and the person of the Holy Spirit. You can't!

We love the Holy Spirit. You'll hear people say, "I love Jesus." We love the Holy Spirit, and we love Jesus, and we love God the Father. And we believe in Jesus. We also believe in the Holy Spirit. We worship Jesus. We also worship the Holy Spirit as God. We welcome him into our lives individually and collectively. We thank him for the gifts that he gives. We see how he empowered the life and ministry of Jesus, and we want to live like Jesus, and we know, as sinners, we can't, and so we invite the Spirit to make us like Jesus a little bit more every day, by the grace of God.

And so he says, "Don't just go do something. Wait for the presence and the power of the person of the Holy Spirit." And then this is the prequel and then Acts is the sequel and Luke wrote a book in two parts, and then we see the fulfillment. The Holy Spirit descends on the church, as he did on Jesus, and he empowers the church, as he did Jesus, and he compels the church forward, as he did Jesus, to continue the ministry of Jesus by telling the message of Jesus, and Christianity explodes from 120 people to billions across nations of the earth.

Let me tell you something. It started in Jerusalem. We're not there. Everything Jesus promised has happened, and the only way you can account for the explosion of Christianity and the transformation of people's lives: Jesus is alive, the Bible is true, the Holy Spirit is at work through the church on the earth. Praise be to God. We believe it, we see it, we enjoy it, we rejoice in it, and we want to multiply it. Amen? [*Congregation applauding*]

Jesus is alive. The Bible is true. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the news of Jesus can go out. We do this through planting churches. We've got four more launching, Lord willing, January 15. We do this through a church-planting network called Acts 29. We give 10 percent of our dollars to it. We've seen over four hundred churches planted in the US, five hundred more potential church planters being assessed continually. A combined Easter attendance of 175,000 people. We're also contributing to church planting via Acts 29 in more than a dozen other nations. Over ten million sermon downloads this year to dozens of nations on the earth. We use technology. We use missionaries. We use church planting. We use anything and everything we can to tell everyone who will hear about this man Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

AND WORSHIP

And then he concludes, the last big idea of Luke. How's he going to end it? What's the grand finale? Jesus is alive. The Bible is true. So we must get the gospel out by the Holy Spirit's power, and worship. And he ends with this, Luke 24:50-53. "Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them." What's on his hands? Crucifixion scars. Can you imagine that moment, emotionally? "What are you doing, Jesus?" "I'm going to bless you with nail-scarred hands." That's what Jesus does.

Do you know what? You're going to see those nail-scarred hands if you're in Christ. His resurrection body still bears crucifixion scars. You ever thought of that? You die, you rise, you see Jesus and he comes to embrace you with nail-scarred hands. I think one of the reasons we won't sin in the kingdom of God is because we're going to see Jesus and his nail-scarred hands all the time, and it's going to remind us of how much God loves us and the lengths he has gone to to save us. It's just like a dad blessing his kids, praying over them, loving on them. Jesus is here blessing his few dozen followers with nail-scarred hands.

"While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven." Can you imagine that? I mean, sometimes we just read this, and then he went up, and they played *The Jeffersons* theme song, and, you know, "Moving on up," and everything was fine, and it was amazing. Can you imagine that? You know, like, "I played Little League with Jesus, and there he goes. That's amazing."

Can you imagine the panic? "What did he say to do?" "Tell everybody on the earth." "What?" [*Congregation laughing*] "Well, we should have a meeting, and he should attend to put together the chart. If we're going to raise the funds for this, it seems like he should make the ask. There he goes."

And he left because he came from heaven to the earth. He accomplished his mission and returned to heaven. So what did they do? "They worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy," they were really excited, "and were continually in the temple," having church, "blessing God." It was worship, it was joy, it was enthusiasm, it was celebration. The Holy Spirit empowers them, and then compels them, and scatters them to tell everybody about Jesus, and we are witnesses to, and beneficiaries of, this ministry of Jesus Christ.

OUR REPORT CARD

Mars Hill, in closing, do you think we're strong or weak at believing that Jesus is alive? We're strong, real strong! We believe that, right? Jesus is alive!

How about that the Bible is true? It's a book that God wrote, and it's all about Jesus. We believe that, weak or strong? Strong, real strong.

Getting the gospel out by the power of the Holy Spirit to the nations of the earth. Eh, sort of strong. I'll show you the giving in a moment. You're like, "We're for it in theory!" Okay, we've got to move beyond theory.

How about worship, joy, enthusiasm, celebration, gladness? Eh, not so strong. So, I'd go A, A, C, D. That's our report card.

And it all goes together. If Jesus is alive, if the Bible is true, if we believe that people are going to hell and Jesus is their only hope, then we should witness and worship. We should tell others of him, and we should rejoice in him; not so that God would love us, but because he already has in Christ; not so that God would be pleased with us, but because in Christ he already is; not because we feel guilty, but because we feel glad that Jesus is alive, that the Bible is true, and that the nail-scarred hands have come to bless us.

KISS THE FEET

And I love how he ends it. I love how he ends it! "They worshiped him with great joy continually." And I tend not to pull out a lot of original Greek words because I don't know a lot of Greek, and I don't want you to distrust what is a fantastic English translation of your Bible, but I do want to point out one little word here: "worship." Here's what it means. Here's what they were doing every day, gladly, collectively, joyfully.

Now, the word "worship" literally means to kiss the feet. Isn't that the perfect way to end the biography of Jesus? And all of his people were worshipping. They were kissing his feet.

So, Lord Jesus, we want to end our time in Luke, where the story of Luke ends. Lord Jesus, I pray for myself, and my family, and the people of Mars Hill Church that, Jesus, we would bear witness, we would tell others who you are and what you've done, and that we would worship daily, continually, collectively, individually, gladly, unceasingly. Jesus, we can think of no better physical posture to articulate our actual condition and what should be the position of our hearts than people on their knees, with their heads bowed in surrender and submission, acknowledging that you are Creator, you are Lord, you are God, you are Savior, you are friend, you are alive, you are the center of Scripture, you are the ruler of history, you are the maker of all things, you are the Savior of all who are to be saved. Lord Jesus, we now ask, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that you would allow us to see this position as the best position, that, Lord Jesus, the world would tell us that everyone and everything should kiss our feet. Lord Jesus, may it not be so among your people. May we have a heart of repentance and forgiveness and gladness. And, Lord Jesus, as we kiss your feet, thank you for the joy that we receive because you alone are worthy to be worshiped, and we were made to worship you. And when we do, we have great joy because you are a great God, and I thank you for an opportunity to teach a great book. In Jesus' good name, amen.

GOD'S WORK AT MARS HILL

Thank you for letting me teach Luke, and thank you for letting me give you two years of my life. Thank you. [*Congregation applauding*] At Mars Hill, we believe that God is at work, and we get to witness his work and worship his work. And I want to, as a bit of a year-end summary, just take a moment to talk about God's work this year. And I want you to share in my joy, in our joy. We don't take credit for anything that God is doing, but we want to give credit to God for all that he's doing.

So I want you to see God's work this year, just a few numbers, and these are numbers of people made in the image and likeness of God that Jesus loves. Some of you say, "What, you care about the numbers?" Yes! We want more people to be loved, more people to be saved, more lives to be changed, more legacies to be altered. Yeah, we want that number to go up. We don't apologize for that.

This year, we're on pace for ten million sermon downloads. I praise God for the age of technology. In the providence of God, we started the church right around the time that something called the Internet came into existence, and the reason that we started putting sermons online is somebody stole our computer. We had no way to get a hold of people, so we had to create a database online, and also we couldn't afford a tape duplication machine. So we were like, "Well, we could put it on this thing called the Internet," and we did in the '90s. And it's all in the providence of God.

So this year, upwards of ten million sermon downloads, which means the news of Jesus is being proclaimed, and I rejoice in the part that I get to play in doing that, and ten million sermon downloads is a lot, especially if you consider the length of the sermons, right? [*Congregation laughing*] Because that's more than ten million hours. Sermons are long at Mars Hill.

Resurgence—which is the vehicle we use to help and train leaders of other churches because we want all churches that love Jesus to grow, and if we can help we want to help. Over six million people have visited Resurgence.

Mars Hill Church has grown to be 12,000 people a week. That makes us one of the largest, fastest-growing churches in America. We praise God for that. We've had over 1,200 baptisms this year. That's amazing. [*Congregation applauding*] And baptism is just about repentance and forgiveness and death and new life through Jesus. So we rejoice in that.

We've got almost five hundred Community Groups. So we have all of these people meeting together as friends, on mission together with Jesus every week.

We now have fourteen Mars Hill churches. On January 15, we'll launch four churches, Lord willing, in three states: Washington, Oregon, and also California. So pray for those.

And we have so much to say thank you to the Lord for. We're enjoying much of God's grace, and it's God's work. God saves people. God wrote the Scriptures. God blesses his Word. God gifts his people. Jesus said, "I will build my church." Jesus is the one who builds our church. So all of this we say is God's work.

OUR WITNESS AT MARS HILL

Now I want to transition to our witness, and I want to share with you, sort of, where we are at. And let me just say that it comes from me with a bit of grief. And this will appear as though we have a financial problem. We don't. We have a heart problem, not a wallet problem, because Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is." What he's saying is, "Your money goes to what you love the most." You give the most to what you love the most, or I should say to whom you love the most.

So this is not a financial appeal. This is a worship appeal. I want, and God wants, more than your money. He wants you. He wants all of you. And our God is a generous God, and he's a giver. God so loved the world, he what? Gave. And we want to be recipients and also stewards. We went to receive and we want to bless others.

This past year, we're coming up on the end of our year, but I want to give you an update from this fiscal year. Over the course of the last year, 24 percent of people at Mars Hill gave nothing, zero. If you gave anywhere from \$1 to \$500, you're in the upper 41 percent.

So what that means, collectively, you're looking at two-thirds of Mars Hill gave nothing or as close to nothing as possible. See, God's work is amazing! Our witness is amazing in a different way, a less glorious way.

\$500 to \$1,500 a year is about 14 percent of the church; \$1,500 to \$4,000 a year is about 11 percent; \$4,000 to \$10,000 is about 7 percent of the church.

We don't teach tithing 10 percent. The Old Testament actually teaches a collected tithe of more than 27 percent. We teach that whatever God lays on your heart—generous, sacrificial, regular, cheerful, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, whatever that is. We're just saying, "Whatever God tells you, do that." And we want you to pray about it and plan for it.

Here's what I know. If everybody does what God tells them, then everything will be fine. But what that means is that, let's say we've only got 737 people giving between \$4,000 and \$10,000 a year. Based upon the average income, those would be people who are giving in the 10 percent range.

What's interesting is most of those are your elders, deacons, and Community and Redemption Group leaders. So the people who are serving, many of them even unpaid, they're also giving. And I would ask you to pray that they don't get discouraged. And as we've shared these truths with some of our leaders, they've been discouraged. They're like, "What? But I'm serving and I'm giving and I'm caring and I'm praying." And they're feeling alone. We don't want them to feel alone. We want them to be encouraged by you participating alongside of them.

\$10,000 to \$20,000 a year is only 185 people. \$20,000 to \$50,000 a year is 47 people. \$50,000 to \$100,000 is 5 people a year. And \$100,000 or more is 3 people.

So some of you may think, "Well, there's just a rich guy somewhere who pays for everything." If you're here, welcome, you know? [*Congregation laughing*] But that's not the case, and we praise God for those who are large givers, but what's really going to make Mars Hill float or sink is lots of faithful givers at whatever level God has entrusted to your oversight and care.

I'll tell you a story about Everybody, Somebody, and Nobody. There was a guy named Everybody. He thought that Somebody was going to take care of it, and Nobody did. And that's kind of the story of Mars Hill.

I think we're going to be okay for this year because I do think that you will respond well, but what I'm concerned about is that you'll only start giving out of a sense of urgency, not a sense of worship. And when that happens, it means that some people see the church as a wife, and others see her, well, more like a girlfriend to take advantage of, but never really get married to. And we want Mars Hill to be a beautiful, loved bride of Christ, and we want people to not just care about her when it is convenient for them, but to care about her because Christ died for her.

Last few things I'll share. I'll give you an annual snapshot from last year to this year. Last year, just to give you a snapshot, October 31, 2010, we had 8,361 people. We had 1,064 give anything. If you gave a buck, you're in. This year, a year later, the same Sunday, we had 12,017 people. I mean, that's up a lot of people, almost 4,000 people. The number of people who gave anything was down (to 986), and that's the issue.

Some of you say, "I'm unemployed." I understand. Some say, "I'm a single mom!" I understand. "I'm upside down." I understand. But what we can't say is two-thirds of the people have a good reason and will stand before God, and he will consider it a good reason when they say, "I gave nothing or as close to nothing as possible."

Some of you would say, "Yeah, but how does the church spend its money?" We've got the annual report. We tell you how we spend the money. We're the most open about it. And I would just say, look at what's happening. It's amazing, right?

WHICH CATEGORY ARE YOU IN?

So here's what I want to do. I want to close with a question. Which category are you in right now? And the good news is the year is not over. So which category will you be in when the year ends? That's the question for you.

If you want to go ahead and worship God through giving, which is one of the ways that we worship here, there are some various ways to do that. You can give the GIVE envelope that you receive on Sundays. Use check, credit card, regular ACH withdrawal, or cash. Don't mail cash. Some people do. Number two, you can go to MarsHill.com and just click "Give," and you can give there, as well, regularly, and/or you could just put your offering in the basket as we collect it on Sundays.

Let me say a few things, and I've not done this well in the past, and so I want to, by the grace of God, do better. I don't want to get angry, and I don't want to manipulate people, and I don't want to guilt you into something, and I don't want to broad brush everyone in a category because that would be unfair.

Let me say, first of all, for those of you who have been faithful and generous, thank you. I mean, you're like the little boy who gave his lunch to Jesus, and he fed thousands. It's a miracle. Thank you. On behalf of Jesus and Mars Hill Church, thank you, for those who have been generous and faithful. Whatever the amount, if your conscience is clear that you've been generous and faithful, thank you.

For those of you who have been not totally faithful, but sort of faithful, I say thank you and please follow through with whatever God has encouraged you to do.

For those of you who have been totally unfaithful, and you're takers and not givers, we would ask you to repent, because not that God just wants your money, but your money sometimes is the way that God changes your heart and he redirects your life and your priorities, and God wants all of you, not just part of you. And so we would invite you to repent and to go ahead and do whatever God has asked you to do.

For those of you who are brand-new Christians, we know you're new. You're figuring it out. We're glad to have you. This is part of the Christian life that all that we are and have belongs to Jesus, and we would invite you to start to grow in understanding what it means to be generous and a steward, so that other people can meet Jesus, and they can enjoy the salvation that you enjoy. And if you're a new Christian, we understand you're in that process. We want to be loving, and kind, and patient, and understanding, and also invite you to experience the joy that Jesus has through giving.

For those of you who are non-Christians, we're not asking you for money, because we're a family, and we believe that when the family has guests, the family should take care of the guests. And so Mars Hill is a family, and you're our guests, and we want you to come to know the Lord Jesus and become a Christian; but at the end of the day, we're not asking you for money. We're not asking you to give anything. In fact, we're asking you to receive salvation through Jesus Christ and receive the gift that God gives. And later on, if you receive Jesus, we'll talk about gifts you may be called by Jesus to give, but that's really not what we want you to hear.

I hope you hear this as a pastor who loves you, and as I speak on behalf of the other leaders of the church, and please be in prayer for your church. Things are going, in some regards, really well, but there's also some great immaturity that we have to course-correct before we have a crisis, and that crisis is consumer Christianity. We don't want to have consumer Christianity. We want to have worshiper Christianity.

So, Father God, I pray for our people. God, I want to say thank you to those who have been faithful. Holy Spirit, would you encourage those who've been faithful? And God, for us, as a people, we want to say thank you for your work, and we want to say help us with our witness and our worship, knowing that worship is, yes, the songs we sing, but also the life we live and the resources we steward. God, you love Mars Hill so much, you died for her. You gave yourself for her, Lord Jesus, and so we ask that you would help us to give, not out of guilt, but out of gladness, knowing that your plan for bringing good news to the nations of the earth is the local church. And so, Jesus, please forgive me if I have not articulated or taught or communicated well, and if I have contributed to this lack of generosity, and help me to do better as a teacher and a leader. But God, please also help the hearts of our people to be generous, Lord God, so that more people could hear about Jesus, and more disciples could get made so that more churches could get planted and so that more legacies could be altered. We ask for this in Jesus' good name, amen.

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.