

Repentance According to Jesus

By Don Green

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Preached on: Sunday, April 5, 2015

Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

The question might be asked and it's a question that I want to press upon your heart here today. As we've sung about the resurrection, as we've sung about the glory of Christ and risen conquering Son, it would be my desire and it would be the offer of God to each one of you here that you each would be a participant in that life. That you would each be a partaker in a genuine saving sense of that salvation and yet Scripture tells us that there are many who will one day enter into the day of judgment and be shocked to find that they were never truly belonging to Christ. That the Lord will say, "Depart from me," and they'll say, "But Lord, did we not do all these things?" and he'll say, "I never knew you. Depart from me you who practice lawlessness." Well, on this joyful day when we remember that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered and bled and died and was buried and was raised again for the forgiveness of the sins of everyone who would ever believe in him, today I want to bring to you with clarity what Jesus says has required in response to his work so that you can partake of that salvation and Jesus made it very clear throughout his ministry of exactly what he requires.

In our day and age particularly, in our weak American culture, both secularly and spiritually we are prone to underestimate and we are prone to treat the death of Christ lightly as though a superficial response, a mere token of a prayer that is not even meant from the heart would be something that would be sufficient to receive Christ and to honor him and to partake of the great work that he did. Let us never forget that our Lord left heaven and walked on this earth, bearing with the contradiction of sinners against his life, knowing full well that his life was appointed to go to Jerusalem and beyond to suffer on a cross to bear the sins of those who would believe in him and sacrifice for them with his own shed blood. That is not a superficial act that Jesus did. It was an act of profound divine love and a profound divine obedience from the Son to the Father who called him to that work.

Well, let us understand, let it sink into our hearts what the hymn writer said, "Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my life, my love, my all." We don't simply nod in Jesus' direction and then keep going on with our lives and think that somehow we have entered into the eternal life which he sacrificed so much to bring to his people. That's nonsense and it doesn't matter that it is often perpetrated nonsense, that it's oft repeated nonsense. We need to go to the Scriptures and see what Jesus himself said. You see, as we gather together today, those of you who do not know Christ, this is the Lord Jesus Christ through his word presenting himself to you that you might share in that salvation that so

many of us here in this room share together and the question is: how may you receive that salvation? How has Christ appointed it? What does he call men to do in response to his saving work? He doesn't simply bestow salvation without any sense of involvement from the human response, there is a conscious, willing response that Christ calls for to those who do not know him. What does he call for? How may you receive salvation? Those of you who are Christians today, make no mistake that what we're about to see here this morning is a review of our own spiritual history. This is a spiritual thermometer for us as well in terms of remembering what our whole spiritual life is to be about.

How may you receive salvation today, those of you who are here and you are outside of Christ and you are in darkness, lost in sin? Jesus made it very clear, he said that you must repent. You must turn from sin to serve Christ if you are to partake of this great salvation. Repentance summarizes the theme of Jesus' entire teaching ministry as we will see as we go along here this morning. It functions like bookends to his entire ministry. I would invite you to turn to Matthew 4 as we start to move into Scripture here as we consider the whole matter of repentance according to Jesus. What does it mean to repent? How is it that we turn to Christ? Jesus left no doubt about it in his teaching ministry over the course of his three years here on earth.

The book of Matthew is kind of the opening Gospel. It is the opening Gospel to the ministry of Jesus Christ and after Matthew gives us a little bit of an introduction to the genealogy of Christ and the birth of Christ and the ministry of John the Baptist which prepared the way for Christ, he brings us into the teaching of Christ so that we could understand why he came and if you look at Matthew 4:17, John the Baptist has declared that Christ is the one that they are to listen to and Matthew gives us a summary statement of everything that Jesus' teaching ministry summarized and what it testified to and what it meant. He said in Matthew 4:17, "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" The kingdom of heaven was at hand in that day because Jesus is the King himself and when the King is present, his kingdom is at hand because the kingdom is fulfilled and represented in the one who holds the kingdom. So here is Jesus embarking upon his public ministry and the summary theme Matthew tells us of his preaching and teaching was that you need to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Now, at that point, he doesn't go on and explain anymore, he just gives this summary statement, "Repent." Well, let's flash forward to the end of Jesus' life. We're just setting context here, and go back to that verse that I ended on in the Scripture reading earlier at the end of Luke 24. I want you to see this. This is so very important because this will give you a framework for understanding everything that Jesus was driving at in his earthly ministry. This is an interpretative key to getting the point. Jesus wasn't calling us to simply live better moral lives, he was calling and announcing to us that our lives were lost in darkness and unacceptable to a holy God and he lays forth what is necessary for us to find our way into his kingdom. Jesus says in Luke 24, look at verse 44 with me, we're just setting context here this morning. This is so every urgent for every one of you and I plead with you to pay attention and ask God to open your heart to understand how this applies to you yourself today. We're not talking abstractly. We're not preaching to the

world. We're preaching to you here in this room here this morning. This is for you. God appointed this very hour for you to be under the preaching of his word in this very way here this morning. This is a divine appointment for each one of you to be here to hear these things and to contemplate what they mean for your spiritual life. This is very significant. We are looking into God's word. We are hearing what the Son of God said during his earthly ministry. He left heaven over this to proclaim it to us and so it is only fitting for us as mere sinful mortal creatures to respond with receptive ears and say, "Lord, what would you have for me here today?"

Jesus said in Luke 24:44, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." He says, "There are 1,500 years of Old Testament prophesy about me that has been fulfilled in my life. All of the Old Testament was pointing to Me," he says. Then in verse 45, "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." And, "God, that is what we are praying for here this morning that you would open minds in this room to understand the Scriptures because we preach in vain, O God, if you don't open minds. If You don't bless the words to the heart, Father, we are wasting our time here and so we beg for the help of your Spirit to open minds as the Scriptures are taught here this morning."

Jesus goes on and says in verse 46, "He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day.'" Look at it all of you, verse 47, "and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Here is the problem that you have, beloved, you're all sinners just like I am. You all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Your righteousness, your religious rituals, your efforts at self-improvement are nothing but filthy rags before a holy God. You bring nothing to the table by way of merit that would compel God to bless you with his salvation and the question is: how do we then have these sins taken away from our account? How do we enter into a realm where God does not hold our sins against us? Jesus makes it plain here and he tells his disciples that they must go out and preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. That is the message that Jesus commanded so here's what I want you to see as we kind of wrap up this little bit of context here, at the very opening of the New Testament, of Jesus' ministry, the opening word Jesus says as recorded for us in Matthew is, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." You go to the end of his life just before he ascends into heaven and Jesus says, "Repentance for the forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed to all of the nations." So this singular theme of repentance functions as bookends to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. It begins with repentance, it ends with repentance. Everything in between is reinforcing that message of repentance. He is declaring simultaneously that we are unacceptable to a holy God in our own life and merit and at the same time he is telling us the way that our sins can be forgiven and it is driven through this door called repentance.

Well, what does it mean to repent then? That's very, very important. That's the million-dollar question. That's the only question that matters for you and me. How can I know that when my appointed time to appear before the judgment seat of God will go well for me? For you? How could you enter into the spiritual realm, the spiritual reality of

forgiveness where God would gladly grant to you an abundant entrance into his eternal kingdom and that you yourself would not be one of those cast away even though you have sat under the sound of the Gospel? How? We need to understand what Jesus taught about this. This is the most important question in the world and what we're going to do today is we're going to answer 4 questions about repentance to help clarify your own response to the message of the Gospel. These are 4 questions that I intend for you to ask yourself. This isn't about you thinking, "Oh, So-and-so over here needs to hear this message because he's a bad person and he has hurt my feelings." Let's drive all of that wicked thinking out of our minds. God brings his word to you for you to hear, for you to respond to, for you to examine yourself in light of it and that's the way we're going to frame these questions here this morning. We're not playing games. We're not here to entertain anyone. We don't care about any of that stage production that Hollywood does better than the church but the church seems to want to mimic. No, we are here dealing with earnest spiritual realities that are the most important thing in your life.

So, as we ask these 4 questions, we'll be defining the doctrine of repentance for you according to Jesus as he himself presented it. Here's the first question that you need to ask yourself and I encourage you to take notes so that you can review these things in your own heart later on. The first question about repentance is: do you recognize your sin? Do you recognize your sin? Let me say something by way of brief illustration to kind of help maybe ease the way into this for us so that we can understand it. When we ask the question, "Do you recognize your sin?" I'm not asking you whether you would superficially admit to men that you are a sinner. I'm asking whether in your heart you truly realize that you have sinned and broken God's law and you are guilty before him. I'm sensitive to that question. I'm sensitive to that application of the question because long before I was a true Christian, I would have verbally told you, "Yeah, I'm a sinner," but deep in my heart, I held a reservation in my heart as I said that. I said, "Yeah, but I haven't sinned like other people have." There was a sense of, "I haven't broken this law of God or that law of God," and review the Ten Commandments and think, "Okay, I'm not in that bad a shape." So while my mouth would say the right thing, in my heart I was cherishing these thoughts that I really wasn't that bad. God had to work in my life and bring me through things to disabuse me of that notion so that I would say from my heart, "No, I am a lost and miserably wretched sinner."

So you see, when we ask the question, "Do you recognize your sin?" we're not talking about mouthing certain words that you have been taught to and conditioned to say because of your exposure to Bible teaching in the past. We're asking, "What really wells up in your heart when you consider the matter of whether you are a sinner or not?" Is there an unconditional affirmation, yes, I am? Or is there a quiet smirk on your face like there once was on mine, "Yes, but"? And you cross your fingers and say, "It's really not that serious." Well, the repentance that Jesus calls us to causes us to recognize our sin.

What Jesus does, go back to Matthew now, Matthew 5, what Jesus does in the context of the book of Matthew is that this summary statement of his teaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," is made toward the end of chapter 4 and then in Matthew 5:6 and 7, he gives what is called the Sermon on the Mount and in the Sermon on the

Mount, Jesus is building on and he is explaining what repentance looks like and one day soon, hopefully, we will go through the Sermon on the Mount together verse-by-verse. But for now, I just ask you to understand that Jesus says, "Repent" in Matthew 4. There is no further explanation about what it means and if it is so crucial for the forgiveness of our sins, there must be some explanation of what repentance looks like and what it means. Well, where you find that definition, that explanation of repentance is found in Matthew 5:6 and 7. Jesus gives an extended discourse on what he means by the concept and the term of "repentance." So what Jesus does is he introduces a number of spiritual attitudes in the first few verses of Matthew 5 to explain what it means to repent from sin.

Now, with that in mind, look at Matthew 5:1, "When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying," and then he moves into his explanation and he is explaining what repentance means and he starts with this lead verse in Matthew 5:3. Look at it with me, if you would. He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." How do I know that the kingdom of heaven belongs to me? Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It belongs to them. They are in the kingdom of heaven, in other words, indicating that they somehow have repented.

Well, what does this mean to be poor in spirit? Understand this, beloved: the kingdom of heaven is not about your material wealth. There is no intrinsic spiritual virtue to poverty. Jesus isn't talking about material wealth here, he's talking about your poverty of spirit and he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," to express the concept of spiritual poverty. He's saying, "Blessed are those who recognize that they are spiritually bankrupt, that they have nothing in their account to pay God in order to get salvation back in return." There is a total absence of spiritual pride, instead there is a recognition of spiritual poverty and bankruptcy that marks the one who is truly repentant.

Now, think with me for a moment here: when you evaluate yourself in light of God's holiness, when you see the sinlessness of Christ and the glory of God, as it were, filling the temple and Isaiah falls down and says, "Woe is me! I have seen the King of Glory and I'm a man of unclean lips!" When you start to understand something about the glory and the holiness and the majesty and the greatness of God, that he is uncreated, infinite and holy and you are created, fallen and finite, you start to realize, "There is nothing about me that would commend myself to him. God doesn't need me to complete himself. He is already perfect in his being and nothing that I could bring could add anything to him."

And when we see ourselves in light of his holy law which touches not only on our external behavior but our motivations and our attitudes, we realize that we fall short of his glory and, beloved, I say this sympathetically, everything I'm saying here today is from a spirit of sympathy for your souls, for your spiritual well-being. I care about nothing today other than the fact that you would enter into the eternal kingdom of God abundantly and fully and safely. This is all for you and for your protection and for your help here today but I must speak to you plainly so that you understand these spiritual realities. Your goodness does not fit you for God. Your religious rituals do not fit you for

God. Being in this building does not contribute any spiritual merit to your account that would force God to reward you with his salvation. Your thoughts, your words and your deeds all fall short of the glory of God and there is nothing that you can do to fix that situation. You do not have the spiritual capacity to put yourself together. You're like Humpty Dumpty falling off the wall and shattered and whatever is left of spirituality can't pull themselves together to be presented whole to a majestic God.

We're all in that condition. We are all lost. Our sin has broken us beyond human repair. You are bankrupt before a holy God. The question is: do you recognize that? Do you acknowledge that from your heart? Have you been brought to a point where you are broken by the law of God and realize that you fall short of the glorious and holy demands of what his law and character require from you? Do you recognize your sin? One of the ways that you can measure that is whether you find yourself objecting and pushing back to these declarations. If you push back and say, "No, I don't believe that. You are making it too bad," you haven't recognized your sin because what Jesus describes here is somebody who is poor in spirit. In other words, repentance precludes a sense of pride and self-reliance. The person who is repentant gladly, unconditionally, clearly states, "I have nothing to recommend myself to God on my own. I am a beggar at the table of mercy. I don't have a birthright, a title to this mercy from God." You see, repentance starts with knowing your own spiritual poverty.

Look at Matthew 5:3 again. I want you to see this. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Notice that he's talking about the poor in spirit that recognizes a lack of righteousness in the presence of God because he goes on in verse 6 and says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." You're hungry because you're unsatisfied. You're thirsty because you don't have what it takes to satisfy that urge that Jesus uses the human desires of hunger and thirst to express a spiritual reality. We hunger after righteousness because we don't have it. We thirst after holiness because we know we lack it and so recognizing our lack makes us poor in spirit in that we come to God not as those boastful in our own righteousness but humble seekers of mercy because we realize that we have no claim on him in our own right. Repentance starts with recognizing your sin and knowing your own spiritual poverty.

My friends, I ask you whether you view yourself like that because it all starts right there. Jesus said in Luke 5:31 and 32, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Someone who thinks that they are righteous in their heart is saying, "I don't need Jesus," because Jesus came to seek and save sinners and so before we are in a spiritual position to receive him, we have to acknowledge that we fall short and we need him and it doesn't matter that that is contrary to the American self-reliant spirit. The American self-reliant spirit carried over into the spiritual realm will damn your soul. Do you understand that? Do you see that? Do you grasp that? Do you see the urgency of it? We have to have the word of God completely wash and cleanse our minds of everything we have been conditioned to think. That's how serious this is. We come to God not self-reliant but looking for something outside of ourselves and we understand that and we freely acknowledge it.

But beloved, repentance involves more than that mental understanding of recognition of sin. Do you recognize your sin? I hope so. I pray to God so but Jesus goes further and probes our hearts further as we consider these things. Point number 2 here this morning, the next question that you need to ask yourself is: do you mourn over your sin? Do you mourn over your sin? And this question needs to be asked too because we have all heard those, the boastful, those who boast in their sin and say, "Yes, I know that I'm a sinner but I don't care. I'm going to go to hell and have a drinking party with my buddies down there." So in one sense they would say that they are a sinner but they love their sin. They rejoice in it. They glory in it rather than being broken and mourning over it. So we've got to go further than simply having that mental understanding of our sin but to have that turn our heart in a way that Jesus describes in Matthew 5:4.

Look at it with me. Matthew 5:4, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." He's describing here an emotional grief over sin. The mourning that he describes here has the idea of inner agony. "Oh! I have sinned against a holy God in my thoughts, in my words, in my actions!" That's the sense and we need to understand here that Jesus is speaking about a spiritual mourning, not an earthly sorrow over the loss of a loved one or the loss of some kind of earthly benefit that we had. Listen beloved, it is so important for you to understand this, that Jesus isn't talking about those who grieve at a funeral indiscriminately. That's not what he's talking about here at all. It couldn't possibly be that because he said in verse 3, "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit." In verse 6 it's, "those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness." This is a spiritual mourning in the context of his overall teaching about repentance that he is addressing here. He's talking about a poverty of spirit.

Think about it with me: this is a promise that those who mourn will be comforted. Well, look, there are millions of people who are grieving today over the loss of a loved one and they are not experiencing any comfort whatsoever. It's not that somebody has an earthly sorrow and they are automatically comforted. That's not it. That has nothing to do with what Jesus is talking about here. He's addressing those who would be his disciples and pursue him, having made a preliminary statement, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What keeps us out of the kingdom of heaven? Our sin. What do we do in response to our sin? We recognize it and we mourn over it. You see, there is a sense in which sin troubles you and in an ideal sense, in an ideal realm if we saw it fully, we would weep buckets of tears over our guilt and our rebellion against God but we don't have to go there with it. The question is not so much an intensity of an emotional reaction but whether it bothers you. Let's just go at that superficial level. Does it bother you that you sin against God? Does it trouble your heart? Do you wish you were not like that? Do you long for something different even though sin clings to you? In other words, beloved, truly repentant people are not flippant about sin. Sin it is not a joking matter to them.

I remember one of the very first conversations I had after my conversion after I had truly repented and I was talking to an unsaved friend of mine who was a fellow student where we were at school, talking on the phone, and I said, "You know, I realize I am a sinner." And he said, "Ah, Green, you worry too much about that! Let's just go and have some fun." He wasn't denying the concept of sin but he was brushing it off as though it

were no big deal. We were close friends at the time and I say that simply to help you have a sense of contrast. The truly repentant person is broken over sin. It's not a joking matter. It troubles him. It grieves him. He says, "My life is not right. My life is a violation of the holiness of God and that's not okay." There is a sense of mourning over it.

You young people that have grown up in Christian homes, do you know something of that of your own self? Do you know something of that in your own heart? You see, this is where you need to go with this because this is about you standing alone in the presence of a holy God. You as one with sin on your account and the question is: what is your response to that? Do you own it? Do you recognize it? Do you unconditionally affirm that? And then does it bother you so much that you have a sense of pain over your sin? I was speaking with someone recently and they were expressing their repentance and they said, "It pains me. It hurts to remember what I used to be like." Exactly. It hurts. You know what that's like, don't you? I see someone nodding back there in the back. You see, a truly repentant person understands that sense of spiritual pain. Well, if you don't know what pain is like, you don't know what mourning is like and you aren't yet truly repentant as Jesus defines it. "Pain! Ouch! I don't like to remember what I used to be like." Whether there are tears or not, it hurts.

You may remember Luke 18:13 when I read it here. You don't need to turn there but Jesus is contrasting a Pharisee and a tax collector and the Pharisee said, "Lord, I thank You that I am not like other men. I tithe of everything that I have and I'm not like that tax collector over there." Then Jesus describes the tax collector in verse 13 of Luke 18, it says, "The tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'" His grief over sin was so great that he had to do something to release it physically. "God, my heart hurts! I can't look up! I'm not worthy to look up at the heavenly realm where you live! I just ask you, God, to be merciful to me because I am a broken sinner before you!" Jesus said, "That man went away justified. The Pharisee, eh, not so much." There was a pain involved.

Do you understand something about that pain, I ask you? Do you know something of that pain? It's one thing to say, "Yes, I'm a sinner," it's another thing to say, "I'm a sinner and it pains me. It hurts." And let's get really detailed and specific, shall we? Particularly in this American culture in which we live and the way that some sectors of Christianity have morphed into little more than a political entity. This is extremely crucial for you to understand: when we talk about repentance, repentance is not measured by your opposition to the sins of society like abortion and homosexuality. That has nothing to do with it unless you are a homosexual or you are unrepentant over abortions in your past. The fact that you are opposed to the sins that society commits says nothing really about whether you are repentant. You see, Jesus calls you to be repentant not over the sins that other people do, Jesus calls you to repent over your sin and while you may not have partaken in the sins of society, you may not be a drunk or a homosexual or an abortion provider or someone who has raised the hand against one in your own womb or a man who pushed in that direction. Yes, those things are sinful but if that doesn't mark you, then it's not the point for you here today. The fact that you are opposed to that says

nothing about how you regard your own sin. The question for you is: does it pain you that you are an angry, irritable spouse? Does it pain you that you harbor sinful lusts and you feed your lusts? Does that pain you? Do you want to turn away from even that? You see, Jesus is calling you to grieve over your sin, not someone else's. So, my question for you today is not: are you a conservative Republican opposed to the sins of the world because that has nothing to do with anything here this morning. The question is whether you grieve over your own sin. Do you grieve over your own spiritual mediocrity? Your lack of love for Christ? Your indifference to his word? Your indifference to prayer? You see, that's where we go with this. We go to your inner man, to your inner heart, and ask: what do you think about your own sin? And the repentant one says, "Yes, I recognize it. Yes, it pains me. I grieve over it. If I could change anything, if I was just free to choose, I would choose to be completely righteous even though sin drags me down." Do you mourn over your own sin?

But Jesus goes further. There is this intellectual recognition of sin. There is an emotional response to sin. But you could have those things and still fall short of repentance. Ask yourself a third question: do you turn from your sin? Do you turn from your sin? In other words, do you engage your will, have you engaged your will to say, "I renounce that. I may not be able to rid myself of all the remnants of sin," and in fact you can't but you can renounce it. You can turn from it and say, "I don't want that to be a part of me. I'll take steps to put it to death. I just want to be separated from sin."

Look at what Jesus says. We've led up to this verse multiple times but in verse 6, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Look over at Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Are you conscious of a life orientation in your heart? Are you conscious of a time, maybe a period of time in your life where you recognized your sin? You grieved over at it and you said, "I must turn away from this decisively in order to have Christ"? You see, true spiritual mourning, to know whether you are merely remorseful or repentant, here's the distinction: true spiritual mourning produces in the repentant heart an unquenchable desire for holiness. It's not just that I hate the fact that I'm a sinner, it's that I want the other side of the equation. I want the righteousness that marks one who follows and knows Christ. Is that your heart?

Jesus called for that change with the rich young ruler also in Luke 18:22. Listen as I read this. You remember the story, Jesus met a ruler who came to him and said, "Good teacher, what must I do to obtain eternal life?" Jesus said, "Why do you call me good, only God is good." They went back and forth a time or 2. Jesus said, "Keep the commandments." He said, "I have kept the commandments." Jesus said to him in verse 22, "There is one thing that you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Now, he's not saying that the man could purchase his salvation by selling his things and giving to the poor. That would be a salvation by works. That's not the point at all. That has nothing to do with what Jesus was getting at here. What he was getting at is this: he says, "I am making a spiritual demand upon you by virtue of my authority of being the eternal Son of God

and what I say to you, young ruler," he speaks to him in the second person singular, he says, "what I say to you is for you to go and sell everything that you have and then come and follow me. Will you do that?" The rich man walked away grieved. He wouldn't pay that price because he was a man of many possessions.

Jesus was confronting his will and says, "Will you recognize my authority to the point that you will do what I say?" He said in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" "Why this mocking of my authority?" Jesus would say. "Why this mocking of me? Why do you mock me with your lips saying, 'Lord, Lord,' and pretending to ascribe or obedience to me but when it comes down to your life choices, you will not obey?" Why do we do that? Well, whatever else you say about it, we see that the will must be engaged with true repentance. You see, repentance affects the inner man. If you refuse your will to Christ, if you say, "I'll do this much but I'm going to keep this much back," and you say, "I'm going to determine the limits of his claim on me and I'm going to clutch this and he can come that far but no further," you're not repentant. You see, Jesus calls for an unconditional surrender of your will to him and you recognize that in principle at a point in time and you say, "Yes, I break my will. I give it to Christ. I unconditionally receive him as my Lord." That's repentance.

Now, that doesn't mean that you won't have to work that out in practice in the life that follows. As we grow, we recognize the implications of Christ's Lordship as different life circumstances and teachings come to us. In the repentant heart, there is settled the principle of, get this, you young people can understand this, if you're 3 years old you can understand this: in repentance, you settle the question of who is boss and you say, "Lord, you're the boss unconditionally. I wipe my hands clean." In past times I have described it, I'm going to have to change my illustration in light of the changing nature of financial institutions and bank phone apps and everything but it's like signing a blank check and you hand a blank check with your name on it, hand it over to Christ and say, "You fill in the amount. Lord, you fill in what this means and what the cost will be. I'm happy to simply sign my name and hand it to you and then step back from any further claim of Lordship over my own life and heart."

You see, beloved, and it's just so important for us to search these things out and to think them all the way through: most every Sunday I will say something along the lines as I appeal for the Gospel in a message, I'll say, "You know, you need to repent and believe in Christ." Well, I can't every time go through and explain everything that repentance means so today what we've done is we have taken a stop and we've said, "Okay, what does repentance mean?" Well, do you recognize your sin? Do you mourn over it? Have you turned from sin to Christ? You see, repentance affects the inner man and if you refuse your will to Christ, if you say, "I won't have that man reign over me even though I feel guilty," you're not repentant. Repentance bows at the feet of Christ and says, "Yes, Lord, please take me. You are the Master, Lord, God and King and I bow before you from deep within my heart." Stated another way, I'm trying to define this from every possible way to drive out any corner of misunderstanding or rebellion in your heart. You see, repentance, beloved, if you want to be serious about repentance, you need to understand this: repentance wants more than to be delivered from hell. You see, you don't have to be a

Christian to say, "I'd rather not go to hell." If you understand the consequences of that in any degree, you say, "That is a place I would rather not go." There is nothing spiritual necessarily about that desire, "I don't want to go to hell," but we're defining repentance here and what true repentance looks like. "You know, say this prayer so you won't go to hell." Oh, no, no.

You see, true repentance wants more than to be delivered from hell, true repentance wants to be delivered from sin. True repentance wants Christ and wants his righteousness and wants that to be the dominating, animating principle of his heart. An affection for Christ. A loyalty to Christ. And an increasing manifestation of the revealed righteousness of God as it is found in the pages of Scripture and in the lovely life of our Lord Jesus Christ and says, "I want to be like that." You see, repentance, when you understand, you start to see the way that this comes together. Here I am, I'm standing here as a guilty, condemned sinner who was not only in darkness but loved the darkness and the horror of that and the shame of that and the guilt of that, you look at that and say, "I don't want to be like that anymore. I will turn away from it all in order to go toward Christ." Does your heart know something of that kind of turning to him?

Now, whenever you teach on repentance like you mean it, inevitably there somebody who either from sincere confusion or from misguided antagonism, objects and says, "Aren't you teaching salvation by works when you talk that way?" No, we're not talking about salvation by works at all. Repentance is not a pre-salvation effort to clean your life up, repentance is an internal response to the work of God and the recognition of sin. It's a heart response that recognizes what God says about sin and turns away from it, not because that turning merits and deserves God's favor but because it is the appropriate response of one who would separate himself from sin in order to receive Christ. It earns no merit. The Bible says that repentance is a gift from God. It's a divinely bestowed gift. Acts 11:18 says that, "God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life." Beloved, if it's a gift, it's not something you can boast about. It's not a work that you conjure up in your own effort. It's a divinely granted response to the truth about holiness, sin and judgment that the repentant person gladly engages with all of his heart.

Let me say this one other way. Lots of different angles here. I encourage you to get the message downloaded after it's over and listen to this again and again if you're uncertain about whether you are a Christian after hearing a message like this. You need to think about it this way: the Bible does not promise salvation to people who are unrepentant. Romans 2:5, "Because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself." Scripture says an unrepentant person is just adding deposits and deposits to his account of wrath. Stated differently: he is building up a debt of wrath that one day God will repay. Don't be like that. Don't refuse to repent. Don't turn away when Christ is graciously showing to you what he requires in order to enter into his salvation. Don't turn away, beloved. The consequences are ghastly and I beg you, oh, I beg you, to take heed and to ask God to help you. Take heed.

So, repentance turns from sin and puts its faith in Christ. Faith receives Christ and rests on him alone for salvation. "As many as received him." I receive him, I rest in him, I rest

my eternal destiny in the merits and shed blood of Jesus Christ alone, that's what faith is. "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." So we could say that repentance rejects sin and receives Christ by faith, believing in the promise of eternal life.

Final question here this morning: are you surrendered to Christ? Everything we've been saying has kind of been building up to this but are you surrendered to Christ? You see, if you would have Christ, Jesus calls you to give your loyalty to him, to transfer your allegiance to him. All other earthly affections become secondary by comparison. Look at Matthew 10 and just look at the fact, we're just letting Jesus speak in his own words here. Jesus calls for your supreme, final affection to belong to him and no one else and without that surrendering of your ultimate affection to him, you cannot be saved. Look at what he says, Matthew 10:37. Please open your Bibles and turn there if you haven't. You need to see the word of God with your own eyes and see that I'm not making this up. I didn't invent this. I couldn't have invented this. Jesus said in Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." He goes right to the heart of our closest earthly affections and says, "You cannot love them more than you love me. I demand, I call upon you," Christ says, "I call upon your deepest, fullest heart allegiance without reservation. That's what you must have if you would have me, otherwise you are not worthy of me." Verse 38, "he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." Christ Jesus confronts every human heart, "Leave your life behind or you will die in your sin."

Look over at the Gospel of Luke. I'm almost done here. Luke 13:3 and then we're going to look at a passage in Luke 14 as well. Luke 13:3, Jesus says, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." This is the repentance that he calls for and it comes attached with a warning, "Unless you repent, you will perish." Look over at chapter 14, verse 26 of the Gospel of Luke. Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." "I will not have one who has a higher affections than his affection for me." Jesus calls for surrendering our entire heart, our heart affection, to him and he says, "If you won't do that, you can't have a part in me. I am Lord and those who would follow me as Lord cannot have another Lord above me."

You might say, "Where does he get off talking that way?" This is the prerogative of the eternal Son of God to speak as he wishes. This is his prerogative. This is his royal prerogative to say, "This is what it takes to enter into my kingdom," and it is right, it is good, it is proper for a King to require his true subjects to own him as their ultimate, their all, and to not try to drag in other earthly affections that are actually supreme in your heart to Christ. These are the words of one who laid down his life blood for your soul. By nature of who he is, by nature of his work, Jesus has, for lack of a better term, earned the prerogative to call us to that and only a wicked, unbelieving heart would try to rip that royal scepter from his hand and say, "You have no right to claim that from me. You save me on my terms." Oh, the blasphemy of it! With his royal scepter, he graciously holds it

out and says, "Will you kiss the scepter? Will you bow to my authority? Will you acknowledge my sovereign work of salvation on your behalf and receive me as King because I will receive you into my kingdom? I'll give you blessing upon blessing upon blessing but the price is your affection for me." Many people, John 6, when John recorded about the life of Christ, when Jesus made this claim, apparent upon people, speaking to thousands, thousands, walked away. They said, "It's a difficult statement. Who can hear it?" Jesus didn't soften the demands, he turned to the few remaining disciples in the group and said, "You don't want to go away too, do you?"

Beloved, we must let Christ be Lord and let him declare the terms of his kingdom and we must respond in the way that he calls us to do so I ask you: have you repented? Have you turned to Christ in this way? Have you turned to Christ in the way that was the capstone to his teaching after his resurrection which we remember this day? Repentance for the forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed in his name to all the nations. Your repentance will never be perfect. In this life, we will continue to fight against sin. Don't measure it by its perfection but ask yourself if the sincere marks of repentance are there in your heart. Is your life oriented toward, are your desires anchored in, wanting Christ and his righteousness more than you want this world and sin? Do you love him more than life itself? Do you understand why a man would tell his wife on their wedding day, "I'd rather be found dead than to love you more than the one who bought my soul"? Do you understand something of that? That's the mark of true repentance even if your sanctification, as it most certainly isn't, isn't yet complete.

For those of us who are Christians as we close, if sinners must repent, how much more should we repent? Charles Spurgeon said, "A Christian must never quit repenting for I fear that he never quits sinning." In the end, this is all joyful. Why? Because repentance opens the door to grace. When we turn to God like Christ has required us to do, we find that he is waiting with untold blessing and grace and favor. I call you to repentance, not simply to leave behind your sin filled judgment certain life, I call you to repentance, Christ calls you to repentance himself through the proclamation of his word because he would bless you. He would pour out blessing upon blessing upon you. He would cleanse you from all of your guilt. He would bless you with joy. He would keep you as our young lady said, hold you fast until you are safe in heaven. He would do all of that. He simply lays out the cost and no one who has ever truly repented and received Christ has found that Christ has cut him a short deal. Christ has blessed every one who has ever received him super-abundantly beyond all that that person could have asked or thought in this life, with freedom of conscience, clearness of mind, love and peace and joy and then still infinitely more when heaven comes. All of that blessing shows that his call to repentance is sincere and well intended for your good.

Beloved, if you walk out of here unrepentant after everything that we have seen from God's word today, your blood is on your own head and there is no excuse for you if you would walk out that way. Christ Jesus has presented himself to you and said, "I will save you from your sin. Come to me. I want to bless you." He says, "I want to bless you." Don't walk out unforgiven. That would be a tragedy. Walk out with Christ. That would be glory.

Let's bow in prayer.

Do you know Christ in this way? Have you repented from sin? In this quiet moment, I invite you to Christ that you might be saved. The Apostle Paul said, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." And as we close in prayer, we say, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

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