



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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Have You Heard the Rooster Crow?

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Just as Jesus' first disciples disappointed him, betrayed him, and denied him, so have we—but just as Jesus stood ready to forgive them, so also he stands ready to forgive us.

Hello friends! This is Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries message this week.

I want to thank Art Akilis for filling in for me while I was out recovering. I hope you enjoyed his series called “A Generous Life”.

As a side note, you can find his series videos and in eBook format on our web site at aulc.us.

I am back in time to deliver the Easter messages this year. Today, we have our Palm Sunday message.

Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, we come today to retrace the steps you took leading you to the last days of your life among us here on Earth and bringing us the greatest gift ever, life everlasting! As we go through our message today, let us take the time to embrace the joy, pain and agony that you faced on the road to the Cross.

I pray Lord that this message reaches those that need to hear it and those who know, to maybe let it spark a fire in their hearts to renew a relationship with you.

We ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Our scripture lesson today, comes from Luke chapter 22 verse 14 all the way through chapter 23 verse 56.

I will not read all these scriptures, but I urge you to go to your bibles and look these up and read them for yourselves.

Apologizing. Saying "I'm sorry". Even thinking about it.

Why is it so hard to say, "I'm sorry?" When we need to say, "I'm sorry" it is because we have made a mistake and hurt someone. It doesn't feel good to admit that.

As you work on your computer or writing in a notebook, you make a mistake and well, no problem, you erase it, delete it or strike it out and move on!

That is like what happens when we say, "I'm sorry." If the person we have hurt forgives us, we have an opportunity to start over and try to do better. Asking for forgiveness and forgiving others is an important part of being a Christian.

Jesus taught us a powerful lesson about forgiveness. He was treated very badly. He was ridiculed, hurt, and in the end he died. As this was happening he prayed to God and said, "Father, forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing."

Jesus had done nothing wrong and still he forgave the people who hurt him. He did all of this so that we could also be forgiven by God.

When you make a mistake or make a bad choice, pray to God and ask for forgiveness. God will erase your sin and you will be able to start over and correct your errors.

The last week of Jesus' life was both the shortest week of his life—and the longest. It was short in that it started on Sunday—we call it Palm Sunday, with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a young donkey—the colt of a donkey—to the acclamation of the crowd. They paved Jesus' path with their cloaks and shouted:

"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!" (19:38).

But Jesus' week lasted only six days—a too-short week—but a week that would turn the world upside down. It was the longest week, because the events of what we now call Holy Week are still reverberating today—still being celebrated two thousand years later.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's look at what Jesus did as he faced his death—and how his disciples responded. I suggest that we do that, because we, too, are Jesus' disciples, and we are subject to the same human frailties that plagued the original disciples.

As he looked death in the face, Jesus did what he could to prepare his disciples. We need to consider what he did for them, because he also did it for us.

Jesus tried to prepare his disciples by meeting with them in the Upper Room to partake of a Passover meal. The Passover meal was intended to remind Israelites that God had delivered them from their four-century stint as slaves in Egypt. God had sent nine plagues to persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. When Pharaoh refused, God sent a death-angel to take the lives of every first-born in Egypt.

But the Israelites had first-born children too—so God told the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb—one per household—and to smear the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. The death-angel would see the blood and spare the Israelite first-born (see Exodus 12-13).

That's where we get the word Passover—from the angel who passed over the Israelite houses and children.

The Israelites observed an annual Passover meal to remember what God had done for them—setting them free from slavery in Egypt.

So it was that Passover meal that Jesus was celebrating with his disciples. He gave them the Passover bread, and told them that he would not eat of it again, saying **"This is my body which is given for you. Do this in memory of me"** (22:19).

Then he gave them the Passover cup of wine, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you"** (22:20).

But then he added this sinister note: **"But woe to that man through whom (the Son of Man) is betrayed"** (22:21). The disciples responded by trying to figure out which one of them would betray Jesus (22:23).

But next comes this really odd thing. Jesus' disciples began to argue among themselves which of them was the greatest (22:24). That would be hard to imagine, given that Jesus had just told them that his body would be broken and his blood shed. Can you imagine partaking of the Lord's Supper—and then beginning to argue about who is greatest?

But we can believe that story about Jesus' disciples, because they never seemed to get it—at least not until Jesus' resurrection. They did one dumb thing after another—until they saw the risen Christ. What Jesus was trying to do seemed totally opaque to them—until they saw the nail prints in his hands.

We can also believe small-mindedness of those first disciples, because we are subject to the same pettiness—the same argumentative spirit—the same pridefulness—that plagued them.

- We argue over the color of the sanctuary carpet—and a host of little things. Arguing isn't necessarily bad. Christ wants us to be hot or cold—not lukewarm (Revelation 3:16). We have a right, perhaps even an obligation, to voice our thoughts. The problem occurs when we become rude or angry, hurting others. The problem occurs when we walk away saying, "Never again!"
- But we are most inclined to emulate the behavior of those first disciples when we argue that our congregation or our denomination is so much better than the other person's. In his great prayer shortly before his death, Jesus prayed that his disciples **"may all be one,"** even as Jesus and the Father are one, **"that the world may believe that (the Father) sent (the Son)"** (John 17:21). But it has been more than two thousand years, and we haven't come even close to trying to answering Jesus' prayer.

When the disciples argued over who was the greatest, Jesus told them that the key to greatness wasn't accumulating power, but was instead serving. As an example of what he meant, Jesus said, **"I am among you as one who serves"** (22:27). That's a point that the church has tried hard to emulate. We have fed the hungry—and have given a cup of cold water to those who are thirsty. We have taken in strangers. We have given clothes—and blankets—to those who need them. We have visited the sick

and those in prison (Matthew 25:31-46). We haven't done those things perfectly, but nearly every church has some sort of heart for those in need. We have heard Jesus at that point.

But then Luke tells us about another disciple who didn't get it—Judas, who betrayed Jesus. Why did Judas do it? Maybe he was taken in by the forty pieces of silver. More likely, he was trying to force Jesus' hand—trying to get Jesus to use his power to drive out the hated Roman soldiers. We can't be sure why Judas betrayed Jesus—but we can be alert to the tempter who whispers in our ears that we should do something that would be equally betraying.

Do we ever betray Jesus? Not like Judas—that's for sure! We would never turn Jesus over to be crucified. But maybe we do betray him in other ways. We crucify Jesus again every time we let our anger boil over into hatred. We crucify Jesus again every time we bend his teachings to fit our pet belief—or our political preference—or anything else that we love more than we love Jesus.

And then Jesus tells us about another disciple who didn't get it—Peter this time. Peter had said, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!" (22:33)—a bold statement, indeed—and I am sure that Peter meant every word. But Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will by no means crow today until you deny that you know me three times" (22:33-34).

Peter couldn't imagine that he would ever do such a thing—but when he saw them arrest Jesus and lead him off to his trial and crucifixion, Peter lost both his courage and his faith. When a young woman saw Peter and said, "This man also was with him," Peter said, "Woman, I don't know him" (22:57). Twice more he was challenged and twice more he denied Jesus. Then he heard a rooster crow, and he remembered Jesus' words—and he went out and wept bitterly (22:61-62).

Have you ever denied Jesus? I'll have to confess that I have.

- I've denied Jesus every time I went with the crowd instead of doing what I knew Jesus wanted me to do.
- I've denied Jesus every time I let fear rather than faith dictate my actions.
- I've denied Jesus every time I tried to change Jesus' teachings to fit the current fad.

I would like to say that I've never done these things. I would like to think that, when faced with pressure or danger, I would say with Peter, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!" But I've heard the rooster crow, and have wept with guilt. If you have any kind of conscience, you've heard the rooster crow too.

But Jesus came to forgive, not to condemn (John 3:17). Yes, we have betrayed him, just as Peter did, but we live under the promise that he has forgiven us. That's the promise of the cross. Jesus died to pay the price for our sins—to redeem us—to cleanse the stain from our souls and make us ready to sit at table with him in the kingdom of God.

That's the message that we need to carry away this week. We need not live lives steeped in guilt. Christ has forgiven us.

- Let us accept his forgiveness and let go of our guilt.

- Let us no longer worry about our past, but let us instead face our future full of faith.
- Let us live the joyful lives of those whom Christ has saved.

That's our Lord's Message for this Lord's day and I hope you got a blessing out of it.

Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed for the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed.

Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!