



TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of **the Disciple**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Jesus came to seek and save lost humanity (Luke 19:10). He accomplished that by dying in our place, paying the penalty our sins deserved (Isaiah 53). His resurrection proves God's acceptance (Romans 1:4; see the "**Digging Deeper**" feature for the proof). *Problem solved . . . or is a response from us required?*

Observation—*What do I see?*

- Open your Bible to Luke 11:23, and supply the missing words from the following statement of Jesus: *"He who is not _____ Me **is** against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, _____."*
- The biblical word translated here in Luke 11:23 as "with" (Greek: **meta**) indicates an association in which one party—in this case, people—acts or exists for the benefit of another—in this case, Jesus, and the biblical word rendered as "against" (Greek: **kata**) indicates opposition and even antagonism.

The biblical word translated as "gather" (Greek: **sunagō**) means to assemble together with, while the biblical word rendered here as "scatter" (Greek: **skorpizō**) means to disperse; to dissipate; to separate or remove things to a distance from each other.

What is the significance of the fact that Jesus' statement in Luke 11 **does not permit degrees**, but rather is "all or nothing"? Is neutrality/ambivalence about Jesus a possibility? Why or why not?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- If a person does **not** act for the benefit of Jesus, it necessarily means that he actively opposes Jesus. The result of not habitually assembling with Jesus will be a continual state of separation from Jesus. What **might** this look like in **daily** experience? What **does** this look like in **eternity**?
- Like it or not, we **can** be neutral about all sorts of things—large and small—from tariffs to man buns. But is it **reasonable** and **just** that neutrality regarding Jesus is **impossible**? **Why or why not?**

What are some other things in life about which we **cannot** be neutral? Is this "fair"? Why or why not?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Neutrality toward Jesus **feels**, well, a bit "unAmerican"! What should we do with these **feelings**?
- How should we respond to a friend or loved-one who insists that there be an "opt-out option" on Jesus? As a group, craft some possible responses. Then, pair up and practice such a dialogue.

Sermon Summary

Gethsemane is really a special place. It was there that Judas betrayed Jesus. It was there that Jesus decided to lay down his life for you and me, after telling his Father, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me." In that "cup" was everything that Jesus hated— all the sin and poison of the world. But he came to the conclusion, "Not my will but your will be done."

While Jesus was praying in the garden, Caiaphas, the high priest, sent his temple guards to the garden to arrest Jesus in the middle of the night. Jesus was then brought before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin—which was kind of like their Supreme Court. There, several false witnesses testified against Jesus. At one point, Caiaphas questioned Jesus, and a trial took place in the dark of night, false witnesses testified, and Jesus was condemned to death (Matthew 26:62-68). But since the Jews did not have authority to carry out the death sentence, they sent Jesus to the Roman governor Pontious Pilate. Pilate asked Jesus directly, "Are you the king of the Jews?" To which Jesus responded, "It is as you say." At this point, some of the chief priests and elders began to hurl their accusations against Jesus. Pilate turned to Jesus and said, "Don't you want to respond to these charges?" But to his amazement, Jesus remained silent, like a lamb before his shearers (Isaiah 53:7). He chose not to defend himself. He knew what the outcome would be anyway.

Truth is, Pilate didn't want to be involved in all this. He would have preferred that King Herod decide. Since Herod was a king, he was especially interested in Jesus' claim to be the King of Jews. He found His claim to be amusing. And so, to mock him, his soldiers dressed Jesus in a Kingly robe and sent him back to Pilate. When Herod sent Jesus back, Pilate hoped to release him through a Passover custom of releasing a criminal of the people's choice. Pilate was certain that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. The Jews incited the crowd to cry out, "Away with Jesus, and release for us Barabbas." Pilate then washed his hands of the matter before the jeering crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to his death yourselves." Jesus was scourged, mocked, and sent to be crucified. After the scourging, they stripped Jesus naked and placed a purple robe on his shoulders, and a crown made of thorns on his head. To complete the ensemble, they placed a reed in his hand, and they kneeled before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they led him away to be crucified, forcing him to carry his own cross, the instrument of his death.

Finally, they arrived at a place called Golgotha. It means, the place of the skull. It was an ancient stone quarry which was often used for crucifixions. Interestingly, it was part of Mount Moriah. You will remember that many years earlier Abraham brought his son Isaac there and was about to sacrifice him, when at the last moment God provided a lamb to take the place of his son. In the same way, God has provided a sacrificial lamb to die for our sins. Jesus drank every last drop of that "cup" of sin that he had asked God to take away in the garden. And when he drank it, he experienced physical pain, emotional pain, but perhaps most of all, spiritual pain. He took that cup and drank every last drop of it as he suffered and died for us on the cross. Seven hundred years earlier the Prophet Isaiah had predicted these events (Isaiah 53:3-11). Today, we join together with 2.2 billion believers around the world to celebrate the most important event in the history of mankind, Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

But this is what I want you to understand. As important as Jesus' historical resurrection was, our response to it is just as important. And that is best illustrated by the two people who died alongside Jesus. These two men were alike in that they both found themselves being crucified for their evil deeds. But they were different in that they responded to Jesus in completely different ways (Luke 23:40-43). They both died that day, but one died all alone in his guilt and in his shame. The other joined Jesus in paradise! The difference was in their response. Each of us, likewise, will respond to Jesus with either hostility or humility, and our response will determine the rest of our eternal destiny.

Why do some respond to Jesus with hostility? Some respond with anger, some with fear, while some are so embarrassed by their failures that they deflect attention from themselves by blaming others. We see that today, don't we? Someone has made a mess of their life, but rather than take ownership for their sin and failure, rather than come to God in humility and faith, they lash out at Him or try to convince themselves that God doesn't exist. People give lots of reasons for rejecting Jesus today. Some seek to justify their unbelief by citing the presence of hypocrites in the church. The presence of hypocrisy, while lamentable, does not nullify who Jesus is, and what he came to accomplish. Some people today reject Jesus because of some negative experience they have had with the church. They felt judged or ignored, or uncared for. But Jesus modeled and taught his followers to love, to forgive and not to be judgmental of others, but rather to point them to a loving and forgiving Savior. Maybe that criminal who lashed out at Jesus was afraid of death and his fear was such an uncomfortable emotion to him, that he jumped over to a secondary emotion of anger. That was an emotion he thought he could control. Hostility against Jesus is a defense mechanism that somehow makes us right and Jesus' followers wrong. It keeps us from facing the guilt of our own sin.

The other criminal responded very differently to Jesus. He said, "We're only getting what we deserve." One of the wonderful things about Easter is that it gives us the freedom to be honest about our own sin. It gives us the freedom to own our sins because we know there is a God out there who is not there to crush us. He is there to lift us up and forgive us.

One of those criminals cursed Jesus, while the other turned to him in humble faith. Everybody responds to Jesus with either humility or hostility—there's no third option (Luke 11:23). Jesus says to all: "Choose today hostility or humility." The third box is not an option.

- If the God who created you, became a man, and laid down his life so that you could have a relationship with Him...
- If that God comes to you in love and you stiff arm him and say, "I don't want to have anything to do with you, even though I owe everything to you. That's a form of hostility.

With respect to Jesus, we all choose either hostility or humility. There is no third option. You are either for him - or against him. Jesus' resurrection from the dead was God's stamp of approval that Jesus was who he said he was, and that he had accomplished what he set out to accomplish. And every human being has to respond to that question (Luke 11:23).

If the God of the Universe has come to this earth and has laid down his life for you in order to conquer sin and the grave forever, nothing less than "My Lord and my God" is acceptable. He calls for your allegiance today. And the reason he calls for your allegiance is because he loves you. He knows that serving lesser gods will destroy you (Matt. 11:28-29). He says, if you want to experience this kind of spiritual rest, choose humility.

One of the great things about Easter is that it answers three vital questions all of us have:

1. Does God really care about me? Easter answers that question forever. Jesus' answer is the cross! When he stretched out his arms on the cross, it was him saying, "This is how much I love you!"
2. Will God forgive me? Easter also answers this question. To a criminal who deserved the cross (Luke 23:41), Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." This man had no opportunity to make amends for a life that had been wasted. He had no litany of good works to offer Jesus. And yet Jesus forgave him. Completely! To some, such grace is scandalous. Some people don't like this story. It upsets them. They don't like it that someone who lived their entire life apart from God could be forgiven on their deathbed. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.
3. Can I really change? It's a question we ask as we face our own addictions, our own failures in relationships, our own ongoing struggle with besetting sins. Again, Easter answers with an empty tomb. We can - because of the resurrected power of the empty tomb. The Bible teaches that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to transform us. And if you have not yet experienced that power in your life as a Christian, that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. It just means that you have not submitted yourself to God to the extent that that power can be unleashed.

To Review:

1. Does God really care about me?
Answer: Absolutely! His love was shown on the cross
2. Can God forgive me?
Answer: Absolutely! To the humble criminal Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."
3. Can I really change?
Answer: Yes absolutely! I can as I draw upon the resurrected power which raised Jesus from the dead.

But there remains one question left to be answered this Easter. And that is...

4. How will you respond to what Jesus has done for you?

How will you respond to God's love, his forgiveness and his power?

Will you respond with hostility or with humility?

Is there credible evidence that Jesus *actually* rose from the dead?

Let's review the eyewitness testimony...

Easter Sunday

Before sunrise, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome spring into action, buying spices to anoint Jesus' body.
Matthew 28:1-4, Mark 16:1-2, Luke 24:1-4

Mary Magdalene arrived first, "while it still was dark". *John 20:1*

The rest of the women arrived "when the sun had risen". *Mark 16:2*

The women find the stone rolled away, the tomb empty, and two angels proclaim the resurrection and tell them to announce it to the disciples.
Matthew 28:5-8; Mark 16:3-8; Luke 24:2-8

The women run and tell the disciples, who think it's foolishness.
Luke 24:9-11; John 20:2

Peter & John nonetheless go. John ran faster, arrived at the tomb, but did not go in. Peter arrived and went in, saw, and believed (something). Then the men left and went home.
Luke 24:12; John 20:3-10

Mary Magdalene came back to the tomb, talked with the angels, then Jesus appeared to her! She recognized, talked with, and touched him.
Mark 16:9; John 20:11-17

Mary Magdalene ran back and told the men, but they refused to believe.
Mark 16:10-11; John 20:18

Jesus appeared to the rest of the women and told them to report it to the men.
Matthew 28:9-10

Jesus appeared to Peter (hour unknown). *Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5a*

Two male disciples (one was Cleopas) walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Jesus joined them in their walk, but was unrecognized until he ate supper with them (and then disappeared).
Luke 24:13-32

These two ran back to Jerusalem and told the disciples. *Luke 24:33-35*

as (minus Thomas) in the locked upper room.
Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25