

**Title: The Exclusivity of the Gospel**

Text: Luke 5:33-39

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Proverbs 3:1 tells us that if we do not forget the teaching of the Lord, *"but keep his commandments in our hearts, they will add length of days, years of life, and peace to our lives."* And so, if you have your copy of God's word with you today, and I hope you do, please turn to Luke 5. We're going to begin looking at verses 33-39 this morning, which is a passage that is all about the exclusivity of the gospel.

In other words, the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ is totally exclusive. It cannot exist alongside any other religion or worldview in one person's heart. You cannot mix the gospel of Jesus Christ with Mormonism. You cannot mix the gospel with Catholicism. You cannot mix the gospel with Islam, Jehovah Witness, Christian science, naturalism, humanism, Buddhism, the gospel, the biblical gospel of Jesus Christ stands alone. It does not accommodate any other worldview. It does not work with any other religion. It is totally and absolutely exclusive.

Now this flies right in the face of the culture in which we live. A culture that exalts intolerance, pluralism, subjective truth, and even universalism. That it really doesn't matter what you believe, because we're all headed in the same direction anyway. As Pope Francis famously put it in 2013, the Lord has redeemed us all. All of us with the blood of Christ. All of us, not just Catholics. Everyone, father, the atheists, everyone, even the atheists. This is the doctrine of our age, and if you paid close attention, it was an idea that even slipped in during the nationally televised memorial service last weekend, that because of Christ's sacrifice, we will all see those who have died and gone to heaven someday. Everyone's saved. Everyone's faith is equally legitimate. All roads lead to God.

In fact, this was one of the first ideas that I was confronted with as a Christian when I started attending college. I was taking a literature course, and the professor, for some reason known only to him and definitely not in line with our course curriculum, decided to co-op literature class for the day and tried to show that all religions were basically the same and that they could all work together. Islam do right by your neighbor. Buddhism, show kindness. And I'm sitting there thinking, whatever. And then he said that for Christianity, the greatest command is to love your neighbor as yourself. And so, see, he said, we can all work together. We're all on our own separate roads that are all leading to God. Well, I had never learned to keep quiet in class. I was homeschooled. I made a lot of noise during class. So, I raised my hand and said, well I don't know much about those other religions, but I know Christianity can't work with them because the greatest command isn't to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said it's actually to love the Lord your God as revealed in Scripture with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus. And with that, the entire classroom exploded with anger because all of a sudden, the gospel was shown for what it really is, a message that is totally exclusive.

There is one God, amen. There is one Savior. There is one faith. There is one gospel. And it is totally exclusive. As soon as you try to mix the gospel with any other religion, worldview, works-based system, you no longer have the gospel. You have nullified it completely. You've lost it because the gospel of Jesus Christ is exclusive. It stands alone. And not only is the gospel incompatible with any other worldviews and false systems, it is incompatible with your old way of life. Whatever that old way of life may have been. We've seen this truth implied over and over again in the gospel so far.

Every time that Jesus calls his disciples, whether it's Peter at the seashore or Matthew at the tax booth, Luke always says that they left what? Everything. They left everything to follow Jesus. It wasn't like they added Jesus to their old life. Jesus became their life. He was their new life. They left everything to follow him, and this is the glorious reality of the gospel. When you really think about it, we don't invite Jesus into our lives. Jesus invites us into his. That's the gospel, and that is far more glorious of a reality. I don't praise God today that Jesus entered into my sinful life, what a horror that would be. I praise God that I, a sinner, was entered into Jesus' life, and that I am now righteous and pure and holy in him. This is the gospel, and that is a truth that is worthy of praise forever and ever and ever.

Well, that truth is only possible because Jesus in the fullness of salvation is incompatible with any other former way of life, whatever it may have been. And this is the truth that's been implied over the last few chapters, and what we're going to see is that this is the truth that is brought to the forefront, and that Jesus declares out right here in Luke 5:33-39, which is the exclusivity of the gospel. This truth is going to be emphasized in this passage in three major movements through our text. In verses 33-35, we're going to see the delight of the gospel and how that delight points to its exclusivity. Then in verses 36-38, we're going to see the difference of the gospel, plainly laid out. That it is, in fact, exclusive and does not work with any other religion or worldview. And then finally, in verse 39, we're going to see the disregard for the gospel and how even people's rejection of the good news of Jesus Christ actually highlights its exclusivity. We have the delight, the difference, and the disregard of the gospel that all points to its glorious saving exclusivity, because it is when Jesus has all of us that he saves all of us.

And so, with that in mind, if you're able, please stand with me out of reverence and respect for the word of God as I get to read our passage today from Luke chapter 5, starting in verses 33-39. Our author, Dr. Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes these words for us today,

*"And they said to him, 'The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.' And Jesus said to them, 'Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.' He also told them a parable: 'No one tears a piece of garment from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wine skins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wine skins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"*

This is the word of God, whose rules are righteous even when he afflicts us in faithfulness.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for the great privilege it is to be able to come together this morning and to study your word. We thank you, Father, that we are not like blind men trying to discern what you are like, feeling out different elements of who you are, and that one religion has a piece, but another religion has another piece. No, Father, I thank you that you are not silent, but you have spoken. And you have revealed yourself to us so that we might know you in spirit and in truth. We see you in the glory of your Son Jesus Christ. We see you laid out in all of your majesty in Scripture. But Father, we, apart from your work, will not understand a single thing you are saying to us today. So, we come to you dependent, and we ask that you, by your spirit, would open our eyes to understand your word so that we might worship and love Jesus and delight in Him more fully as we ought. So that the world would look at us and they would see a supernatural joy and delight that makes sense only because Jesus is alive and is with us. Father, I pray that you would work in our hearts today for your honor and glory in this way.

In Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated.

So, the first point of this passage that highlights the exclusiveness of the gospel and the only point that we'll take time to focus on this morning is the delight of the gospel in verses 33-35. And here we find ourselves in a very similar, at least in the same or a very similar setting as what verses 29-32 described as the last time when we were studying in the gospel of Luke. Jesus' disciples are in public, and they're being accused of misbehavior in their ministry. Back in verses 29-32, the Pharisees and the scribes have confronted Jesus and his followers for eating and drinking with sinners and tax collectors. You see, Jesus had just called Matthew, a tax collector, to leave his old life behind and find a new life by following him. And Matthew does it. He leaves everything and follows Jesus.

And one of the first things that Matthew does as he discovers the new life that he's found in Jesus is he throws a party. I mean he throws a feast to celebrate the salvation and the new life that he's found in Christ. And he invites all of his friends to come. He wants them all to come and meet this Jesus who has saved him and to meet his followers. And so, they have this feast. And at this feast, Jesus sits down across from these people who are lost and enslaved to their sin. And he talks to them about their need to repent. He talks to them about their need to turn from their sins and their former way of living and to follow and trust in him.

Well, the Pharisees don't like this. This doesn't look very good. They were appalled and not only because of who Jesus and his disciples were with as we studied last time, but also as we find out here because of what Jesus and his disciples were doing. They were celebrating. They were having an enjoyable time at this feast. And so, we're going to see that Jesus' correction that he gave back in verse 32, *"I have not come to call this self-righteous but sinners to repentance."* That correction falls completely on deaf ears.

These pharisaical Israelites were so aghast at seeing Jesus engage in celebrations like this, activities that were completely foreign to them, that they confront Jesus once again in verse 33. You'd think they'd learn by now, but nope. This goes on for three and a half years. Look at it with me. They say to Christ in verse 33 of Luke 5, *"they said to him, 'The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.'"* Now what they're doing here is pointing out to Jesus the very obvious difference that existed between the actions of him and his disciples and the actions of regular first century Judaism. We see the warped Judaism that existed at the time of Christ called for mandatory prayers and fasting, not voluntary.

You see, every day there were certain ritualistic prayers that were cited at certain times throughout the day. And so, when the right hour struck, everyone was to stop whatever they were doing they would go out into a public place, and they would recite their prayers from memory. It became all mind and no heart. And on top of that, they had created also this extra biblical practice of mandatory fasting, mandatory fasting again, not voluntary. I need to be clear that there's nothing wrong with voluntary fasting. This happened many times in the Old Testament, especially during times of great mourning and distress or great danger or times of great correction and confession and turning to God. During times like this, people would fast and that is appropriate. Fasting at these times makes sense for those who believe that God exists.

For example, when your child is dying, your most pressing need in that moment is not to eat, it is to pray. When danger arises and destruction is near, your most pressing need in that moment is not to eat, it's to pray. When you're confronted with the sickening nature of your sin at a church service, your most pressing need at that moment is not to go to Bob Evans, it's to pray. And when trials come and spiritual wisdom is required, your most pressing need is not to eat, it's to pray. That's biblical fasting, by the way.

Fasting happens when the need to seek God's face and his word and the need to seek God's deliverance and prayer becomes more important than anything else in all of life, even eating. But that's not what the Pharisees were engaged in at this moment. No, they were engaged in mandatory starving that was scheduled every Monday and Thursday. As Jesus illustrates through a parable later on in Luke 18, the Pharisees would go to the temple and say, *"O Lord, I thank You that I am not like other men."* I am righteous. They're sinners. Why? Because I fast twice a week. See their fasting had nothing to do with humbly seeking God's face and his word or seeking his help and prayer. It had everything to do with looking righteous and religious in the eyes of others.

In fact, the Pharisees worked really hard to make sure that everybody knew how religious and righteous they were. They wanted to make sure that everyone knew that they were fasting. In fact, they had cosmetics for fasting, makeup. They would whiten their faces to look as deathly and sunken as possible. They would mess up their hair. They would even cast dirt on themselves to make themselves look as miserable and therefore as spiritual as possible because, after all, to be spiritual is to be miserable in their minds.

Well, then along comes Jesus and all of his followers, and they are markedly different. Rather than being miserable like everybody else around them, feeling weighed down and guilty and burdened by guilt and sin, you see Jesus and his disciples going around celebrating life and enjoying the relationships that God has given them. Jesus just exuded and infectious joy and delight upon all those around him, and so when Jesus tells those disciples, you know, what were you doing at that feast? Well, we were doing serious gospel ministry. They turned to him and say, well, how come your serious ministry looks so much different than John's or ours? Why are John's disciples marked by constant fasting and mourning and solemn prayers and yours aren't? You know what the short answer is? It's because they were still John's disciples, they weren't Jesus's yet. If they had met Jesus and if they had become his disciples, they wouldn't be fasting anymore at this moment, they would be feasting. And that's what Jesus tells them in verses 34-35, an awesome passage. *"Jesus said to them, 'Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?'"* And the answer is, no, you can't.

I get to officiate a wedding in October, and I was laughing as I was thinking to myself, what if this was to happen. Can you imagine if you were to stand up in the middle of a wedding reception and say, hey, stop being so happy, right, there is, no cake will be eating today, right? There will be no punch, no food, no refreshments at all, we're just going to sit here seriously and fast, right? Man, they would kick you out of that wedding real fast. Why? Because a wedding, that moment when a bride and a groom are coming together, that is a time of great joy and celebration, not a time of mourning, not a time to be thinking about other concerns in your life. And the Pharisees understood that, in fact, they had written down in their own rules of fasting that it was forbidden to fast during a wedding or during other times of feasting and celebration. Even they acknowledged that there were times of such great joy and celebration that all other earthly activities and concerns and worries melted away in light of the moment. And Jesus is telling them, this is one of those moments. Why? Because I'm here, I've come, I'm the bridegroom who brings joy to his people.

And by the way, that is an astonishing claim that Jesus makes here, because throughout the Old Testament, the only person who is ever described as the bridegroom who brings joy to his people is no one else but God himself. Isaiah 54:5 says, *"For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name..... for the Lord is called to you like one does to his own wife."* And again, Isaiah 62:5, *"As the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."* And Jesus here is picking up on that Old Testament picture, and to all of those who had ears to hear, he's saying, I'm here, I'm the coming of the Lord, I am the coming of God, I am the coming of the bridegroom, he has arrived, I'm right here. And once the bridegroom comes, everything changes. Talk about an exclusivity.

Jesus describes the relationship and the delight between him and his people like that of a marriage, like that of the delight between a husband and his bride. That is as exclusive as it gets. See back then in the Jewish culture, the celebration of a wedding didn't start until the bridegroom arrived. Almost the opposite of what we do today, the focus was almost exclusively on him.

See back then in that culture, the bride would get herself ready at her family house. And then she would wait with all of her friends for her betrothed to arrive. That'll make sense of some of Jesus' parables that

we're going to look at later on in the Gospel of Luke. And as she waited there, as the bride, she would be focusing on herself. She would be doing her hair, getting herself dressed up, doing whatever was necessary to get ready for the bridegroom's arrival. And then the moment the bridegroom arrived, everything changed. Every concern melted away and everyone's focus landed exclusively on him as he drew near to her house to take his beloved bride to their wedding celebration at his house at last. In that moment, when the bridegroom suddenly appeared, nothing else mattered. All worries and concerns were gone, all was joy and happiness in the presence of the bridegroom.

And talk about exclusivity, Jesus is saying, I'm that bridegroom. I am the one who changes everything. Now that I'm here, every concern you've ever had no longer matters. If you knew who was standing in front of you, your fasting would be done too. And you'd be filled with joy and happiness because the bridegroom has arrived. And therefore, can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The answer is no. For with Jesus standing there, just think about it, what reason was there to possibly mourn and fast over? You think you need to abstain from food in order to seek God's face in his word? The glory of God is right there in front of you in the face of Jesus Christ.

You think you need to abstain from food in order to seek God's deliverance in prayer? God's deliverance is literally standing in front of you, the deliverer himself. With the direct presence of the Lord among them that day, what on earth was there to fast about? Every single day, if you consider what Jesus' disciples experienced, they were surrounded by Jesus' joy, they were embraced by Jesus' affection, they were cleansed by Jesus' purity, instructed in his wisdom, protected by his power, they were participating in His freedom, and they were encouraged by his own hope. And this happened day after day after day after day.

The bridegroom had come, and it had changed everything. There's no reason to fast when the bridegroom is with you, and there's every reason to celebrate. Now the time for fasting though would come. Jesus says in verse 35, *"The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days."* You see, the Gospel of Luke is headed somewhere. And I want you to think about the image that Jesus has just described. That is a violent, grievous image being described by Jesus here. Can you imagine a more heartbreaking image than that of a man drawing near at last to the woman that he loves only for him to suddenly be ripped away from her in the final moments?

Now to keep myself from referencing Hallmark movies that I was forced to watch growing up, if you want a modern parallel to this, a slightly cooler but still expresses my nerdiness, it's like when Steve Rogers finally gets a date with Peggy Carter at the end of Captain America, the first Avenger. Some of you are tracking with me right now. He finally gets the kiss. He finally gets the girl. He finally has a date, and then suddenly through an act of sacrificial heroism to save Peggy and all that he loves, he's violently ripped away from her at the end of the movie by a span of over seven years. It's absolutely heartbreaking. He just wanted that date, he just wanted to be with the woman that he loved. And now he's been taken away, and what do we as an audience feel in that moment in the final shots of that movie if you've ever seen it? Man, we feel grief. At least I did. He was my favorite character. I could have cared less about everybody else.



People used to say I was an old soul, and I never really understood it, and then I was like, oh, I relate more with this World War II vet than I do with anything else. But we feel grief, and what's interesting is that Steve does as well, even though Captain America goes on, all these adventures to save the world over and over again you can always tell it'll never be fully right in Steve's world until he's back with Peggy. And as you go on this journey over many movies with Steve going through all these pains and sacrifices, you keep wondering what's the point of all this, where is it all headed until finally you come to the final scene of the final act of the final Avengers film, and you realize that everything has taken place, all the hardship, all the pain has all taken place in order to bring Steve and Peggy together at last. I'll admit it, I bawled like a baby.

You know why? It's the gospel. That's why. It's exactly what Jesus is describing here. He's saying that there was coming a day when he, as the bridegroom, in the midst of drawing near to the ones he loves, is going to be taken away from them. And then suddenly, through the gospel, he warns that this sudden remover will be more than just the time, by the way, between his death and resurrection, but it would actually be the time between his resurrection and his return. Jesus describes this extended time of absence repeatedly in Luke 12, Luke 17, Luke 19, Luke 22, Luke 24. You can get this picture that he's just trying to tell them that this is going to happen.

In fact, in Luke 17:22-24, Jesus uses the exact same opening expression that you used here in verse 35, when he says, *"Behold, the days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man."* In other words, he's looking and saying, there's going to be a day when you wish you saw me again face to face, and you will not see it in that day. And as Jesus says here, in that day, they will fast. By the way, it's future active imperative. In other words, the time of fasting that Jesus is talking about here is more than just a brief period that ends after three days. He's discussing an ongoing practice of fasting, because there's going to be an ongoing absence of the bridegroom. In other words, the reason for fasting is going to return. And I like this because this is realistic for us, as where we live here on earth. God's people will need to seek God's face, and his word, why? Because Christ's face won't be there. God's people will need to seek God's deliverance and prayer, because our deliver will be waiting his return soon from heaven. And in these days, we fast.

In this transitory time between Christ's first and second and final return, we are faced with trials of various kinds, are we not? Unless you're living your best life now, in which case, that's really sad. This is not the best life now. There is a better life to come. We're faced with pain and hardship, are we not? Where we're often wondering, what's the point of all of this? We're going on all these journeys, where is all this headed? And in those crisis moments, there is something more important than eating, isn't it, when we enter into those trials and hardships? There's something more important than eating, it is seeking the Lord's face and his word and seeking his help in prayer.

And indeed, this is exactly what we see from the early churches recorded in the book of Acts. In Acts 13:2-3, we read *"that while the believers in Antioch were worshiping, were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' And after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."* And again, in Acts 14:23, we read,

*"And when they," that is Paul and Barnabas, "had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayers and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed."* And why did they do that? It's because they were burdened in the absence of their bridegroom and knew that nothing was more important in those moments than seeking his face and his word and his help and prayer.

Jesus tells us that those days, the days that we're now living in, were coming. But those days were not this moment, here in Luke chapter 5. Here at this moment, the bridegroom was still with them. At this moment, they could still see his face. At this moment, they stood in the fullness of the delight that is found in the presence of the Lord in the presence of their great deliverer. And I want to remind you, brothers and sisters, that this day of being able to stand in Christ's direct presence in the fullness of his delight is coming again very soon. Revelation 22:3-4 describes this coming day, when we read, *"No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in their midst, and his servants will worship him."* And they will what? *"See his face."* And what will that day be? That will be a day of feasting, not fasting.

On that day, we will say, according to Isaiah 25:9, *"Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; let us be glad and rejoice together in his salvation."* And we will, beloved. Revelation 19:7 describes the future when *"we will rejoice and exalt and give him the glory, for the marriage supper of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready."* The bridegroom is coming, and we will be together with him at last. And this is the yearning of God's people in the world today. This is what it means to be a believer, as even Titus 2 describes, *"we are waiting for the blessed appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."* We are keeping our lamps burning, waiting for the bridegroom to come. We are keeping ourselves dressed for service because he's coming at any moment. Our hearts ache for this. What a day that will be as we sing, when my Jesus I shall see, when I look upon his face, the one who saved me by his grace, when he takes me by the hand and leads me through the promised land. What a day, glorious day, that will be.

This is the delight of the gospel, the delight that Jesus brings. And that delight in the gospel, by the way, makes all the difference. As the rest of the world is burdened and weighed down by sin and corruption and death and sickness and illness, we get to live with an ever-living hope because Jesus Christ is coming. And we will see his face. There's a delight in the gospel that is to come, but I want you to know that the delight of the gospel is not just reserved for the future. It spills over into today. It's not just a future delight of the gospel, there's a present delight. For even though Jesus is not yet with us in all this fullness and finality, we're not yet feasting with him in his kingdom as Jesus promises at the end of Luke. Nevertheless, he is still very much with us.

As Jesus promised before his departure in John 14:18, *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* And so, he would be present with us, in a sense, even during his departure. And how has Christ come? He has come through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. And we need to remember this. As Paul says in Romans 8:9-10, *"the Spirit of God dwells in you."* The Spirit of Christ, Christ is in you, Paul says. And so, I want you to step back and just think about that for a moment, because I think there's an immediate application for us.



The reason why Jesus' disciples had a joy and a delight about themselves was because they were in the presence of Jesus. Jesus was with them. What about us? Is Jesus with us? Yes. Even as Jesus says in Matthew 28:20, "Behold," I am what? What's the promise? *"With you always, even to the end of the age."* Beloved, even though we are waiting his full and final return in a very real sense, Jesus is already with every single one of us who have trusted in him. We are in him; he is in us, every single believer. And so, guess what? Every believer should be markedly different than the non-Christian in their spirit and affections and in their delight. As Psalms 33:1 says, *"Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise befits the upright."* The redeemed should be marked characteristically by a life of unique joy and delight. And I want to remind you of that. This is the exclusivity of the gospel.

It creates a delight in the lives of those who have been saved. There's a delight in the gospel because there's a joy in Jesus. And this is one of the things that should set us apart in the midst of this world. We have joy. We have a positive disposition that is grounded in the person and promises of God. And there's a responsibility, by the way, on our end to cultivate this joy and delight in Jesus. As Jesus teaches us in John 15, *"Abide in me and I in you.... so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be full."* We are given gospel joy and delight in Jesus, but if that joy and delight is to manifest itself and to grow and shine more brightly, then we must abide in Christ.

First, we must abide in Christ's word or rather have Christ's words abide in us. We must spend time in God's word. Second, we must abide in Christ's presence through prayer. We must spend time in prayer. And then third, we must abide in Christ's love. We must remember that our identity and value is that we are loved by Christ with an everlasting love. And when we do that, right, when you abide in Christ's word, when you abide in Christ's presence, when you abide in Christ's love, just as these disciples did, when we abide in the presence of the Christ who indwells us, our lives will be marked by a surprising joy and delight that sets us apart from the rest of the world. And this is one of our strongest tools for evangelism.

When you're talking to an unbeliever, you know one of the ways that you can immediately blow past every single argument that they will try to raise to the gospel, ask them this simple question, do you have joy? And you'll immediately expose the futility of all of their religious pursuits or non-religious pursuits. Does it bring you joy? Their answer, if they're being honest, has to be no. Why? Because joy is only found in the bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Our lives must be marked by a joy and delight that sets us apart from the rest of the world. Now we need to be honest, we will have ups and downs, right? We sin. We neglect God's word. We neglect prayer. We neglect thinking of the gospel and when that happens, our joy dims. But if we're saved, we're going to be drawn back to Christ and to the joy of our salvation. And this is the delight that sets us apart. It was the delight that set apart the followers of Jesus 2,000 years ago. It is the joy that sets us apart today.

The bridegroom who is coming is with us. We are ransomed, sealed, restored, and forgiven. So, I encourage you to rejoice in the Lord this week, believer, and again I say rejoice. Pursue the delight that is found in the deliverer. Don't let a busy schedule or mindless apathy steal that joy from you as it probably already is. Spend time and abide in Christ's word, his presence, and his love this week so that you might exhibit the delight and joy that only Jesus brings.

This is the word of God from Luke 5:33-35, which I consider a great privilege to have been able to share with you today, which I now commit to your further study and your faithful obedience until Jesus, our joy and help, returns.

To that end, let's pray.

Father, I thank you for this passage that we've been able to look at today, even in these few brief moments. Father, I thank you for the joy that Jesus brings because of the forgiveness that Jesus' blood bought. Father, that we do not have to fear you because perfect love casts out all fear. And that we now have a joy and a delight knowing that our sins are forgiven, that we are accepted in Christ, the beloved one, and in that we find everlasting joy. Father, I pray that you would help us to be more firmly grounded this week as your people and your word this week. Help us to realize that circumstances are not what brings happiness. Happiness comes from you. Joy comes from you. Father, I pray that you would help us not to neglect times of prayer and communing with you in prayer. Father, I pray that we would also spend time in studying the gospel and remembering afresh what it means to be forgiven of our sins. Father, help us not to look like those in this world: gloomy, discouraged, downcast. Keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus this week, Lord, so that we might be of eternal good to others.

We ask this in Jesus' name and for his glory, amen.

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