

# A Good Lord's Day Evening

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[0:00] Well, what makes for a good Sunday evening? Football? Going out with your friends, a movie with your family?

! Well, what does make for a good Lord's Day evening? John chapter 20 shows us, if you would turn there, John chapter 20, and we'll begin reading at verse 19 and read through verse 23. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. After he said this, he showed them his hands and sighed. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven.

[1:23] If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. Well, that was a good Lord's Day evening. It didn't start off that well.

The disciples were gathered together on that first day. They weren't there to worship. They were there to hide. They were there because they were afraid.

The door was locked for fear of the Jews. So their minds were not on the things of the Lord, but on the people out there.

What are they plotting? What if they find us? What will they do to us? Their minds were full of things that were going on outside those locked doors.

Maybe they were debating what to do next. We need to get out of the city. If they killed him, they'll surely kill us.

[2:27] Everything is ruined. Jesus is dead and we're in trouble. Maybe they were sad because of what they had done the last few days.

Disowning and running from their Lord. Well, what started so badly took a 180 degree turn. Well, why?

We see what makes for a good Lord's Day evening. You see it here. It was who they met with.

That's what made it good. And then what they heard and what they saw and then how they felt.

All those things came together to make it a good evening. And so we're going to look at each of those things in turn. And first we're going to look at who they met.

The doors are locked, but locked doors can't keep Jesus out. Jesus came and stood among them.

A large stone couldn't keep him in the grave.

[3:30] Death and hell could not keep their hands upon him. Even though death's claws and death's jaws were in his throat. Could not keep his prey. Jesus, my Lord, we sing it.

He broke free from the grave. He broke free from death. And so, of course, locked doors can't keep him out. So in he came and he met with them. And it was a Sunday evening that Jesus showed himself to his disciples.

And it wasn't the last time that he did that either. The very next week, they were gathered together again, behind locked doors again. And Jesus came and came to them.

There's another Lord's Day recorded as well. John the Apostle was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, Revelation says. And the risen Lord came to John and met with him.

And the first sight that John had of Jesus, the very first thing that he saw when he turned to hear the voice was Jesus walking among the candlesticks. Jesus walking in the midst of his churches.

[4:39] So Jesus loves to meet with his people on the Lord's Day. And he's here with us now. Let that sink in for a moment.

He's here with us now. It's a good Lord's Day then, isn't it? To meet with him. And what a blessed and a kind and a Savior and Lord we have.

He's not far away. Where two or three are gathered, he is there. Where his people meet, he joins them. And so are you anxious, afraid, sad?

Are you full of thoughts about what is out there? Well, Jesus meets with us tonight. And that's the answer to whatever problem you bring tonight.

Jesus is here. Well, why was it a good Lord's Day evening? Secondly, because of what they heard. Not only who they met, but what they heard. Jesus stood among them and he said, Peace be with you.

[5:44] Now, to their troubled hearts, that was more than just a greeting. To their troubled hearts, that was good news. And that's the first word is peace. It's the gospel. The gospel is a message of peace.

The shepherds were keeping their flocks by night. And the angels of the Lord came. And what was their message? Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace. To men on whom his favor rests. The gospel is a word of peace. It's a word of blessing. It's a word of reconciliation between God and man. There's no more hostility.

But endless blessing. And the gospel is an announcement, a proclamation of that peace. It's not do this. This is what you must do.

Here's the challenge. Here's what you must overcome in order to get in good with God. No, the gospel is God reconciling men through his son.

[6:45] The gospel is what God has done to bring peace. And so the gospel is a word of peace to them. So sin has brought hostility. Sin has brought conflict.

It's brought hostility between God and man. It's ruined that relationship. Because sin is the opposite of God. Sin is not merely the breaking of this or that rule.

It's not merely the breaking of some arbitrary rules that God has just set up for no particular reason to make it difficult on us. Sin is the opposite of God. The law is a revelation of his character.

And then to break those commandments is to show how we are opposed to the very nature of God. And so naturally, sin ruins peace with God. Opposites cannot come together when they hate each other.

Now this might sound trite, but it's a simple illustration. I can't stand cauliflower. I didn't choose to not like it.

[7:53] I don't want to not like it. But I don't want anything to do with it, that's for sure. And not just because. Because my taste buds are opposed to it.

Something about me is opposed to cauliflower. I don't choose to like it. I don't hate it because I just feel like it. It's contrary to me. Now sin is God's cauliflower.

It's not like he just chooses not to like it. It's vile to him. He hates it because it arouses his anger. It's disgusting to him.

It's the opposite of him. He doesn't choose to like it or not. It's contrary to his nature. And so, of course, he hates it. And now that is what we have done.

And that is what we have become. We've participated in this rebellion. We've participated in this sinful opposition to God. We have taken the side of what is contrary to God.

[8:52] The flesh is enmity to God. It's hostility to God. It will not. It cannot submit to God's commands. And so here you are.

You're at war with God. Whether you think about it or not, you're at war with God. You can't make peace. No matter what you do in and of yourself, you cannot make peace.

You can't make peace because what you are is enmity toward God. But what you can't do, God has done in the death of his son.

A song that I've been listening to a lot lately. It goes like this. Grace and peace. How can this be?

It's a good question. How can there be peace between God and man? Grace and peace. How can this be? For lawbreakers and thieves. For the worthless.

[9:57] The least. You have said that our judgment is death. For all eternity without hope, without rest. Oh, what an amazing mystery.

What an amazing mystery that your grace has come to me. Grace and peace. How can this be? The matchless king of all paid the blood price for me.

Slaughtered lamb. What atonement you bring. The vilest sinner's heart can be cleansed, can be free. Oh, what an amazing mystery. What an amazing mystery that this grace has come to me.

So what makes for a good Lord's day? Hearing this word. Hearing this gospel of peace. Peace be with you.

And how those words must have flooded into their hearts. What was the last of Jesus that they saw? What was the last Jesus saw of them?

[11:00] He saw their backs as they turned away and ran. What were the last words of Peter? I don't know the man. But to them who ran.

But to them who said, I don't know the man. He says, peace be with you. We're friends. You've sinned. You turned away from me.

You left me on my worst day. But peace be with you. Grace and peace. How can this be? The answer was in that song.

The matchless king of all paid the blood price for me. And that brings us to our next point. Not only what they heard, but what they saw. After he said this, he showed them his hands and sighed.

How can there be peace? Here's how. Not torn hands. Scarred side. And not tiny scars.

[12:04] Not pinpricks. Spikes had torn through his hands. And a spear had plunged into his side. And they saw his scars. They saw his wounds.

So what makes for a good Lord's day? Seeing Christ and him crucified. Seeing him paying the price for the sin that I have committed.

Seeing the signs of his dying love. You didn't love him to the end. But he loved you to the end. And so tonight we come with our sin.

We come with our shame. And just like the disciples, we meet Jesus. And there's things in the past week, the past months, that we're ashamed of.

That we wish we could scrub from our past. And Jesus says, your love is weak, but mine is strong. Your obedience is incomplete, but my obedience was complete. I obeyed for you to the very end.

[13:06] And so we might come with our sin, but Jesus won't let us stay there. He won't let us stay there. Sin never has the last word. Love always does. Jesus' love always does.

He points to his wounds and says, here is cleansing for your filth. Here is covering for your shame. Here's defense against your guilt. My blood has been poured out. And it's in his blood, brothers and sisters, it's in his blood that our sin sinks to the bottom of the ocean and is never seen or remembered again.

Listen to Thomas Boston. What falls into a brook may be retrieved. If our sin fell into a little brook, then someone could come and pick it out.

But what is cast into the sea cannot be recovered. Oh, but there are some shallow places in the sea. True, but your sins are not cast there, but into the depths of the sea.

And the depths of the sea are devouring depths from whence they shall never come forth again. But what if they do not sink? He will cast them in with force so that they shall go to the bottom and sink his lead in the mighty waters of the Redeemer's blood.

[14:23] Where is your sin, dear Christian? It's in the depths of your Savior's blood. Past memory, past thought, in oblivion, in darkness where God does not even see, where God does not even remember.

He says, I will remember them no more. Praise God that the Son's blood covers our sins. Now, seeing those wounds, seeing his love, that's a good Lord's day.

And now, last, we've seen who they met, what they heard, what they saw, and now how they felt. How they felt. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

A good Sunday is a happy Sunday. Now, obviously, this evening, there are a lot of reasons to be sad.

It's a very difficult evening for a lot of reasons. But there is a joy and there is a peace that comes to us on those best of Sundays when we've seen the risen Lord, when we've seen the signs of his dying love.

[15:38] Now, a good Sunday is a happy Sunday then. When we find ourselves resting in Jesus' arms and in his righteousness. This day started in sadness, but it ended in joy.

Jesus himself, it was a happy day for him. Think about where his day began. Alone, dead, in a grave. And now look where it ends.

He's alive and with his friends. It was a happy day for him. And that joy overflowed to his disciples. And so locked in the room, afraid, sad, their master was gone.

But he had said, I tell you the truth. This is going to be something hard to believe now. But I tell you the truth. You will weep and mourn while the world rejoices.

You will grieve. But your grief will be turned to joy. He had gone away and they had mourned. They had cried. And now he was back. And so they rejoice.

[16 : 37] So what makes for a good Lord's Day? Well, a day that ends in real joy. Because you've had fellowship and communion with the living, risen Lord. Now, I know there are some folks, some Christians that just live on emotions.

And for some people, going to church is all about the experience. They're swinging from the chandeliers. It's all about the emotions. It's all about the experience. There's no truth. There's no doctrine.

It's all just about what you feel. So you go and I want to feel. I want to feel. I want to feel. And that is sub-biblical. It is sub-Christian. Christianity is a whole person religion.

And that includes your mind. It includes truth. But that being said, we cannot let their abuse rob us of true experience, of true fellowship with Jesus Christ.

And so we can't live in suspicion of experience. We can't let them rob us of our bread. We can't go from one ditch into another and say, well, we must simply believe.

[17 : 40] And it doesn't matter. You just take him at his word. It doesn't matter how you feel. And that, too, is sub-Christian, sub-biblical. Christianity is a full person religion. And that includes your feelings.

And so we must agree with Jonathan Edwards when he said, true religion, in a great part, consists in holy affections, consists in holy emotions.

And so if this is real to us, if Christ is with us, he is real to us, then there must be joy here. Joy of being loved.

Joy of him coming and saying, peace be with you. He said, I'll come to you, and no one will be able to take your joy away from you.

I will give you a joy that the world, the devil, that Satan and sin will never be able to take away from you. And so now here he was, alive and with peace on his lips.

[18 : 41] Alive in their presence, saying, peace be with you. So this is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. So dear Christian, the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Your joy, your experience of the grace and truth of the Lord Jesus is not something that you can take lightly because it is your joy. In Pilgrim's Progress, before Christian goes up the hill of difficulty, there's a spring beside that hill.

And it says that Christian, before he climbing the hill, refreshed himself in that spring. This Lord's Day evening is that last spring before you climb into the difficult week in front of you.

And so refresh yourself. Rejoice in the Lord and what he's done for you. You need that. And that's a great part, a large part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John Owen says this, He gives comfort no other way but by giving to the minds and souls of believers a spiritual, a sensible experience of the reality and the power of the things we believe.

[19 : 51] So there are things, there are facts, there's objective facts, there's things that are true. And what the Holy Spirit does is he takes those things and gives us a sensible experience of the reality and the power, the goodness of them.

And he goes on, Give a soul an experience of the taste of the love and the grace of God in Christ Jesus. And whatever its condition, it cannot refuse to be comforted.

So the Holy Spirit is meeting. He comes on behalf of Jesus Christ to bring these things to you. So what do you need to get through the week? God's promises?

Yes. But also a real sense of them. A real taste of God's love and grace. And when we taste God's love in Jesus Christ, we can't help but rejoice.

Whatever is going on around us. Even in the midst of our deepest sorrows, we cannot help but rejoice and be strengthened in them. Now, do they make everything go away?

[20 : 55] Do they fix everything on the outside? No, but they give strength in the soul. And so what makes for a good Lord's Day? Being overjoyed with Jesus. And so now tonight we come to the Lord's Supper.

And who meets us? Our Lord does. He's the host. And he's the meal. Now, there's more than just us remembering tonight.

There's more than just something going on in our heads. Christ is here by his Spirit to be with us and to feed us. To make these things real to us.

His dying love real. And so what do we hear? Well, Calvin called the Lord's Supper a visible word. And Jesus preaches peace to us in the Lord's Supper.

He says, my body was broken for you. And by my wounds, you're healed. His body was broken for us to bring us to God.

[21:58] To make us God's children. These things are sealed to us. And they're made real to us in the Lord's Supper. Well, what do we see? We see signs of his dying love.

Look at the bread. Look at it as it's torn. Look at it as it's sitting in your hand. Torn apart.

And you eating it. Look at the cup. They were meant to be seen. They were meant to be felt. They were meant to be sensed. They're visible signs that Christ loved me.

And he gave himself up for me. And he gave himself up completely for me. And if we do those things, if we see and we hear and we meet with Jesus, the end of all this should be joy.

Because sin doesn't have the last word. Christ does. Sins are great. Christ is greater. Where sin abounds, God's grace much more abounds.

[23:01] Look at your sin. Look at it, yes. But don't stop there. Don't let sin have the last word.

Jesus cried out, It is finished. It is finished. And brothers and sisters, it is finished.

Praise God. Amen? Amen.