3rd Sunday of Easter

**“The Last Class”**

Luke 24:36-48 / April 18, 2021

Everyone will be reverent and decent at the last moment. This is because the moment will never come back again, and because it is at a moment that you can no longer experience. So, at the moment of graduation, retirement, or parting, people have a reverent mind. People often leave meaningful words or messages at those last moments and remember those moments for a long time. At the last moment, we often experience the most valuable and important things.

Randy Pausch, professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University, was given a limited time to live because of pancreatic cancer. But he wasn’t frustrated and wondered how to have fun with the rest of the time, and what kind of wisdom he should leave for his three young children. Then, when he had three to five months left to live healthy, he gave his last lecture at Carnegie Mellon University. You can listen to his last lecture on YouTube, and you will find how pleasantly and cheerfully he gave his last lecture. He wrote a book around this lecture, that was published in 2008 under the title *The Last Lecture.*

In fact, what he said was neither new nor so profound. But because it was the thoughts and words he had at the end of his life, we feel that his words and writings are something of a value. How desperate and sincere was what he wanted to say to his young children who would live without their father after he died? How precious was the last thing he wanted to say to his loved ones? I read this book very emotionally.

My mother lived with concern for my health all her life because I was weak and had always been sick. A year before her mother’s death, I had another big illness, and as soon as I recovered, she started getting sick. She kept losing consciousness because of her brain tumors, but later she couldn't recognize anyone. One day, however, I just called my mother for her to hear my voice. To my surprise, as soon as she heard my voice, her consciousness returned for a while. And she said one last word. ‘Sean, don't get sick. Never get sick.’ That was the last word my mother left me.

Everyone gets sick in life. How can we not get sick? If so, was my mother's last word nonsense? No. This is my mother’s last words that I will never forget. It is a message of love that cannot be heard again in this world, concerned about the health of her son even until the moment her life was ending. I cannot forget my mother's word of love because it was my mother's last message! The last message is so precious.

Eleven disciples were gathered in one place. When they were talking about Jesus' resurrection or that it couldn't be, Jesus appeared in front of them. When we read the final part of the Gospels, including today's text, we mainly pay attention to how the resurrected Jesus appeared to his disciples, but rather, we need to pay more attention to what the resurrected Jesus said to his disciples. Because what Jesus said at this moment was Jesus’ last word or message on earth.

The disciples were excited as they saw the face of the risen Jesus, heard his voice, and touched his hands and feet, but Jesus knew he didn't have much time. If he left soon, the disciples would never see Jesus' face again and would never hear his word. Therefore, in the short time left, Jesus had to give his disciples a final teaching. What was his last teaching? The teaching was about how to live with Jesus without Jesus, and about how to live with Jesus without Jesus’ reality.

In short, it is a teaching on how to live with Jesus in an age without Jesus, and how to see and touch Jesus in an age where we cannot see or touch Jesus. Jesus wanted to teach it to his disciples before he left this world. The reason why these teachings are important is because today we are living in an age where we cannot see or touch Jesus. The disciples were not the only ones who must learn to live with Jesus in an age without Jesus. We in this age are the ones to learn this last teaching of Jesus. So, I want to name today’s text Jesus’ last class.

***1st Lesson – About Peace***

What did Jesus teach his disciples in this last class? First, he spoke of **peace**. The resurrected Jesus appeared in front of his disciples and said the first word was, **“Peace be with you” (Luke 24:36).** This was not just a greeting. Jesus had already spoken very importantly about peace to his disciples in John 14. There, Jesus explained that peace was deeply related with the Holy Spirit.

In John 14, Jesus said, **“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever… I will not leave you as orphans.” (John 14:16, 18)** Then he explained that evidence of the Holy Spirit being with us will emerge, which is ‘peace.’ Let’s see Jesus’ word, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)** Peace is proof that the Lord is alive in us.

Are you in peace? I hope you are in peace. I want to see evidence that the Lord lives in you and that the Holy Spirit is in you. I also want the peace within you to be a proof that the Lord is alive to many people. The peace within us is bound to overflow to others. That’s how the Peace maker works. We cannot see or touch the Lord today, but through the peace within us we can be more sure of the living Lord than seeing and touching.

***2nd Lesson – How to Touch Jesus***

The second lesson Jesus taught in the last class was how to touch Jesus. Let’s see verse 39. **“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see.” (24:39)** Why did Jesus let them touch his hands and feet? What is the relationship between living with Jesus in an age without Jesus and touching Jesus’ hands and feet? In Today’ text, Jesus emphasized that he is not a ghost. So, he showed that he had flesh and bones, and he even ate the food in front of them.

At the time, influenced by the Greek culture, the appearance of the dead was regarded as the appearance of the spirit of the dead. This is a belief in a ghost that has no substance, or an abstract belief that lacks concreteness. We too often think of the spirit like an insubstantial ghost, or think of faith or love too abstractly. What Jesus wanted to say while letting them touch his hands and feet, showing his flesh and bones, and even eating food is that believing in Jesus is not as abstract or insubstantial as a belief in a ghost, but as concrete as touching his hands and feet.

Then, how could we touch Jesus’ hands and feet in the days when Jesus is gone? Jesus taught it already in Matthew 25. **“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)** When we touch one of the least of brothers and sisters, we are touching the hand of Jesus. Do you want to touch Jesus’ hands and feet? If so, let go of your abstract and insubstantial beliefs, and then go out into the world and touch the hands and feet of Jesus, disguised as one of the least of brothers and sisters. That is the only way to touch Jesus in an age when we cannot touch Jesus.

***3rd Lesson – To Be a Witness***

The last lesson Jesus taught in his last class is about being a witness. Jesus opened the hearts of His disciples for the final lesson and made them understand the Bible. The content was this. **“The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.” (24:46-47)** Then he added: **“You are witnesses of these things.” (24:48)**

Looking at these words, it is explained that Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected in order to allow all nations to be forgiven of their sins. It is to forgive everyone that Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected. And Jesus said the disciples were witnesses of these things. What are witnesses doing? They are people who recreate the past. If so, the mission of the disciples is to recreate Jesus' forgiveness for all people so that it does not fade into the past.

What is the best way to be a witness of Jesus who forgives everyone? We tried to be witnesses by explaining this verbally, doctrinally, and theologically. But can that allow people to experience Jesus’ forgiveness? For people to really know that Jesus forgave everyone, we have to forgive others. This is the true meaning of being a witness. When we become witnesses of Jesus by forgiving others, people will be able to understand that Jesus forgives their sins. Forgiveness is the precious way to prove that Jesus is alive in this world without Jesus.

As I talked about the last message, a story came to mind. There was a pastor who was about to retire after 45 years of pastoral work. The church carefully prepared the last service for the pastor’s retirement. Many members of the church participated in the service to bless his long ministry. It was time for the sermon and the pastor was called to give the last sermon. But he sat for a long time with his eyes closed. After a while, he woke up with his eyes open and came up to the pulpit. Countless people were waiting breathlessly for what he would say.

The pastor finally opened his mouth. He said, “I have a sermon I have prepared, but while sitting in the chapel this morning, I thought I shouldn't preach this sermon. As a pastor I had been serving for 45 years and believed in Jesus all my life, and I wondered what it would be if I could say in a word what it is to really believe in Jesus. I thought I should say that in this last sermon. So, I pondered and realized that there was only one thing. I will tell you that from now on. I hope you listen carefully.” Then he began to sing a hymn.

**Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me so**

**Little ones to Him belong they are weak, but He is strong**

**Yes, Jesus loves me. Yes, Jesus loves me**

**Yes, Jesus loves me. The Bible tells me so**

“Believing in Jesus means believing that Jesus really loves me, as weak as a little one.” After adding this word, the pastor descended from the pulpit. All the congregation stood up and responded with applause. Doesn’t this pastor’s last sermon resonate deeply?

What about Jesus’ last lesson? We live in an age where we cannot see or touch Jesus, but there is a way to live with Jesus more clearly than seeing and touching. Please peace be with you and live a life that spreads peace to the world! Please touch the hands and feet of Jesus disguised as one of the least of brothers and sisters! Please be the true witness of Jesus who forgave everyone by forgiving others!

Amen