

MISSING THE FINAL HYMN, MT. 26:30

INTRODUCTION: Story of the Last Supper, closing with "After they had sung a hymn they went out." It is to be noted that one of the Apostles had already gone out into the night before they started singing that final hymn. Judas left the meeting right after he had betrayed the Lord, so he missed the final hymn.

There are times in our lives when we miss the climax of a great inspirational opportunity by a prior betrayal of our dear Lord.

I. We can miss the blessing of a great spiritual revival by neglecting our opportunity to participate.

A. Like the revival beginning here next Sunday.

B. Like a similar opportunity which you may have neglected at some point in your past life. Had you participated, your life might have been drastically changed, but you missed it.

C. This reminds us that we might have taken advantage of other opportunities in our life for a better education or vocational training or experience, which might have completely changed the direction of our life. For some it is too late; for others it is not too late if you act quickly. But some opportunities do not return.

II. We can miss the opportunity for outstanding spiritual achievement if we do not remain for closer communion at the feet of our Lord.

A. Note the example of Mary who chose this way of devotion while her sister Martha was excessively busy with other things.

B. The way of contemplation and devotion leads to the goal of spiritual excellence.

1. The Scriptures are for meditation

2. The Psalmist knew the value of meditation in the Word of God day and night.

C. Most people today do not want to use their minds to think with.

James Russell Lowell left us some thought-provoking lines here:

"When I was a beggarly boy
And lived in a cellar damp,
I had not a friend nor a toy,
But I had Aladdin's lamp.
When I could not sleep for the cold,
I had fire enough in my brain,
And builded with roofs of gold
My beautiful castles in Spain."

Too many of the modern generation have not enough fire or imagination in their brain to enable them to escape from their prison surroundings.

Jesus Christ will not allow his true followers to be mentally lazy, without at least feeling guilty about it. Full salvation demands the "renewing of your minds," according to the Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:1-2).

One great preacher used to say when a few people in his congregation complained that he was preaching over their head, "Then raise your head!"

D. If Christians depart from the feet of Christ, they probably forsake also the fellowship of other Christians, and thus they invite a terrible loneliness to come upon them.

If you leave Jesus and His people, you leave behind you the source of true Christian joy; you not only miss the final hymn, but you also miss the climactic experience of Christian Joy and Peace in believing.

1. Many in our day have found to be all too true the words of Paul Tournier, the Christian Swiss physician, psychotherapist, and author of many fine books, that loneliness is the major malady of our time.

2. There are thousands of lonely people all around us. Many of them turn on the radio at night just to hear a human voice bidding them goodnight. Lonely single parents with no adult companions terrorize or abuse their children out of deep despair and frustration.

If these and others would only stay with Jesus and his people until the last hymn is sung, their hearts might be strangely moved to trust the Lord and discover his way of joy and gladness.

E. When people turn away from Jesus before making their commitment to Him, they need to ask, then, to whom they will go, as Peter did. There is no one else to turn to. Without Christ there is no other sure hope, but with him there is absolute confidence.

One of the best known American epitaphs was written by Benjamin Franklin for himself and appeared in a 1771 almanac. Here it is:

The Body of Benjamin Franklin,
Printer,
Like the Covering of an old Book,
Its Contents torn out,
And stript of its Lettering and Gilding,
Lies here, Food for Worms;
But the Work shall not be lost,
It will (as he believed) appear once more,
In a new and more beautiful Edition,
Corrected and amended
By the Author.

Since one of the most tragic elements of loneliness is caused by the fear of being left alone in death, let us as Christian believers, be assured that the final hymn we'll sing as we cross that dark river will not be a solo; it will be at least a duet which our Lord will sing with us, but I am convinced there will be a great celestial choir singing along with us too. What a day that will be!

III. We can miss the opportunity for decision and commitment which climaxes the worship services of the church.

A. Many do not seem to appreciate the beauty and purpose of the entire worship service as a whole. Each part is important, in its sequence, without any omission or slighting of any single element, from the beginning to the end of the worship service.

That is why I dislike seeing people come habitually into the service late, or leaving early, or moving around or creating any distraction during any part of the service. They seldom know what they are missing, and they almost never realize how much they are interfering with the worship and devotion and response of others to the Word of God.

B. Sometimes people are deeply moved to give their hearts to the Lord, or to rededicate their lives to him, but something happens to cause them to postpone their decision. On the other hand, when they see others making their decisions and commitments, it encourages them to go ahead and make theirs before the final hymn is over. This is truly a most important and climactic part of the service, and it is a tragedy to miss the significance of this part of the service, the invitation, or the call to discipleship.

C. It is strange indeed that more of our people who attend our observances of the Lord's Supper do not see the meaning of these symbolic elements representing the broken body and shed blood of Jesus and decide that, if He loved them so much, they would come to him in faith and repentance and make him Lord and Master of their life.

Perhaps it is not merely that they do not remain physically until the last hymn is sung, and the invitation is extended, but their problem is that they are not MENTALLY present throughout the whole service. Perhaps while their body is here, their mind is somewhere else.

What miracles would take place in scores of lives if only the people physically present in the church services would think seriously about what is being said and done around them in the worship of God, and what it all means, and what it has to do with them in their private lives, and how they should respond to it all when the final hymn of discipleship is prayerfully sung.

I am sure there wouldn't be nearly so many missed opportunities or wasted blessings if only everyone had such a high regard for giving the whole service of God a chance to speak to their heart, and far fewer would go out too soon into a dark night of unbelief and loneliness, while complaining all the way that the church has no relevant message for them. Come o Jesus while there is yet time.
Come now while we sing our final hymn!

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