

Well, let's pray. Father in Heaven, thank You for the beautiful reminder that You will be with us to the end. Lord we ask You that You will be with us right now. We are about to open Your word, we recognize that this is a sacred experience that we are entering into, and we are asking for You to be our teacher. We are asking for You to bring conviction through Your Holy Spirit, and that each one of us will be warmed by Your presence. That we would all walk out of here closer to You than when we arrived. Heavenly Father we pray our hearts will be changed for eternity. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

It was hot, very hot! It had been hot all day, it was hot that night. It was 2 in the morning. I was lying there, in the upper bunk, in a dorm room that was on the second story of the all girl's dorm, at Indiana Academy. It was summer, it was camp meeting, and it was hot. We knew we would be in this unaired-conditioned facility, so we brought a fan. It was an isolating fan, it would just go back and forth; and when the wind hit you, it was just a blast of hot air, that's all it was. Just laying there on the top bunk, three children down on the floor, wife on the bed below me; they are sound asleep, I couldn't sleep. It was just too hot. Plus, I was in charge of early teens this year, and I am trying to work through all the details, is this going to work, is that going to work? And you know how it is if you have any type of responsibilities.

I was lying there and there was a light tab at the door, so I jumped down off the bed and I opened the door, and this individual said that there was a man downstairs who needed a pastor, could I help? So I said, sure, I'll be right there. So I got dressed, went downstairs, and sure enough there was a man. He introduced himself, his name was David and we walked out to this pick-nick table area, and there was a young lady, about 18 yrs. old that was seated there. And he introduced me to her, her name was Linda. Now David said that he worked in the hospital in Indianapolis, and he was on his way to the camp meeting to stay with his family who was already there. They were already camping. His shift had ended, and he was driving there, and as he got near the Academy grounds this young lady, Linda, threw her self in front of his van, trying to commit suicide. He saw her out of the corner of his eye, swerved around to miss her, didn't make any contact at all, stopped his van and went out, and here was this young lady collapsed, overwhelmed with grief and emotion, and she was there.

So I asked her why she did that. And she began to tell the story of how her life had unraveled and things had gone bad and just one problem after another. And what kept it off was that she had committed the unpardonable sin. And she recognized, hey, I can never be forgiven from it, why continue living, why play a roll, why go through with a sham, so she wanted to commit a suicide. I said to her, "Linda, what did you do to commit an unpardonable sin?" And she quoted from the Bible; she said that she had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. I said, "Well, how did you do that?" She said, "Well, I was frustrated with God, I am angry at Him, I am angry at Him now" she was telling me. And so, she just reached the point of frustration that she cursed

out the Holy Spirit. And in her mind, she had crossed the line. She did that as the final rejection of God. And then the weight of that donned on her, and she decided to take her life.

Well, it raises a couple of questions. We are going to study these questions here today. The first one is: what does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? The second question is: is suicide the unpardonable sin? Let's begin our study in Matthew, chapter 12. There are three passages we are going to look at, all are short, and they refer to the same comment that Jesus makes. We begin in Matthew 12 verses 31 and 32. Jesus is speaking, He says: "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

Mark records the expression in chapter 3 verses 28 and 29 if you will turn there. Again we have Jesus speaking. He says: "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation." Luke records it in Luke chapter 12 and verse 10. Here again are the words of Jesus: "And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven."

Well those are the three passages that we are dealing with, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Now one of the principles we've been learning in trying to understand the Bible, is you want to look at the context. What happens before, what happens just after the text that we are reading? What is the background? And we are here in Luke, so let's just look at the background of Luke and see if there is anything we can learn? Luke chapter 12 verse 1, it says: "In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known."

Well, verses 1 and 2, basically Jesus is dealing with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. In verse 2 and 3, you see a little bit of a bridge. He says, "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known." Verse 3, "Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops." So basically, the context has been, verse 1 is about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, verses 2 and 3 is accountability for words that are spoken. Verses 4 and 5 Jesus will identify who we should fear. "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Verse 5, "But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell, yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

Verses 6 and 7 will identify how closely God is acquainted with us. Verse 6, “Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” Verses 8 and 9 are about confessing Christ. “I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” Verse 10 is the verse we already read, and you come to the conclusion of this in verses 11 and 12 about persecution. “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Now a careful reading of this passage helps us to identify a literary structure. Notice, you have hypocrisy of the Pharisees, accountable for words, whom to fear, God is acquainted with us, confessing Christ, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and persecution. What is the one thread that ties them all together? The one thread is, Jesus said them. But it’s fairly obvious by reading it that Luke has compiled sayings of Jesus, and placed them here in his Gospel. It is almost like reading some of the later chapters of the Book of Proverbs. Where they’ll talk about something, and talk about something unrelated, except it’s about God, and it’s wisdom from God, but it’s not tied together even pragmatically. That’s what you have here in Luke. And so when you look at the Luke verse, “anyone who speaks the word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.” You discover that contextually we don’t get anything out of that. It’s something Jesus said, but we really don’t know who He said it to and what the circumstances were behind it.

When we look at Mark, Mark’s story is essentially the same as Matthew’s, so that’s where we are going to look and see if we are going to find the context to understand what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is? Please look at Matthew, chapter 12. Matthew 12 beginning with the verse 22; it says, “Then one was brought to Jesus who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’” So, you have a big crowd, you have a man that’s demon possessed, you have a man that’s blind, you have a man that can not speak. He is presented to Jesus, Jesus heals this man, cast out the demon, and the multitudes that are there are saying; “Hey, is this not the Messiah, could this be Him?” I mean is it this what’s supposed to happen? Verse 24: “Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, “This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub,” the ruler of the demons.”

Now Beelzebub is another name that they had given to Satan. And you’ll see that in the response that Jesus gives. So, there you have the story, that’s the background. Jesus has delivered the man from demon possession, He has healed the man, and the people are saying, “WOW”, and the religious leaders are saying, “He did that, but He did by the power of Beelzebub.” Now notice Jesus’ response, verse 25: “Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts

out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast our demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.”

Apparently they had some people who cast out demons. And Jesus says, well, what power did they do that by? Verse 28: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Now, it’s note worthy that Matthew doesn’t often use the phrase, the Kingdom of God, he likes, the Kingdom of Heaven. He prefers the phrase, the kingdom of Heaven. And when Matthew uses the phrase, the Kingdom of Heaven, he is talking about Jesus being here. When Matthew uses the phrase, Kingdom of God, he is talking about the age to come when God rules over the world on His throne. And so when Jesus is quoted by Matthew as saying this, Jesus is tapping into that idea, He says: “But if I cast out Demons by the Spirit of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come.”

He is saying, “That eternal reign is here, I am Him, right now.” And He goes on to say, “Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.” He is saying, Satan maybe a strong man, but I am stronger Man, I am coming in and I am taking Him off his throne. “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men ...” there is our context. We are going to learn what it means more in just a moment. Let’s look carefully at the verse. Verse 31: “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men.” In the King James Version it says: “All men are of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” New American Standard Bible says: “Any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men.” The New International Version it says, “Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men.”

Isn’t that wonderful news? Now what about the word sin, we’ve been studying about sin for about six or seven weeks now, what does it mean here? The word is our familiar word in the Greek, “hamartea”, it means, “missing the mark.” It is sin it’s every day sin, and Jesus is saying that that sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men. All, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men.

I want to teach you a Greek word, it’s called, “blasphemea” that’s the Greek word. That’s where we get our English word, blasphemy! You folks are sharp; I mean you are right there. (☺) What does it mean? In the Greek it means, vilification, evil speaking, railing against. And in the Amplified Version of the Bible which takes the Greek and adds enough English words to give you the meaning of it, I’ll quote it says: “Blasphemy, that is every evil, abusive, injurious speaking or indignity against sacred things.” So Jesus is saying that all “hamartea”, all missing the mark, everyone of those and the vilification, evil speaking, and railing against the sacred things, all that will be forgiven. All that will be forgiven.

Forgiven in this passage it means, to lay aside, to leave, to omit, to put away. So it’s the forgiven that we like. It’s the forgiven we long for. However, Jesus says: “But, blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.” Now, there is a big clue and a big help when we compare different versions of the Bible. In the Amplified Version

of the Bible, first I'll read King James: "Blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men." Catch this, quote: "Blasphemy against the Spirit shall not and can not be forgiven." That's from the Amplified Version, what was added? Can not, can not! There is something peculiar about this concept, can not. Well, look at verse 32. Jesus says, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

You all know that you can speak against Jesus and still ultimately have forgiveness. Some of you have done that. Some of you did that prior to your conversion, some of you have been converted and hit your hand with the hammer, and you are right back to where you were before. We know from the experience of Peter and Paul, that they both railed against Jesus and they found forgiveness. Jesus says, "It will be forgiven him." And we praise God for that. We praise God that we can be forgiven. "But," Jesus says, "Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him in this age or in the age to come." Why? What is going on? What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in the context of what we are reading?

Notice this, Jesus in an act of delivering a man from demon possession, and in the act of healing him, has combined two things to demonstrate salvation and deliverance in His work for humanity in the world. So attributing the salvation and deliverance work of Christ to Satan, is blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. It is deliberately denying God against plain and obvious evidence. So much so, that there are many scholars who actually believe you can not even blaspheme against the Holy Spirit today. You could then because Jesus was there. God in cognate was with men. And if men rejected that, that would be blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. I am not sure I subscribe to that entirely, but they have a powerful point. It is the final rejection of God's plain salvation activities; it is the hardening of the heart against God. That's why it can not be forgiven. Because the person is not asking to be forgiven, they don't even want God.

Now the horrible thing about the context here is that I would say, if somebody was a serial killer, or a child molester, or you can, there is all kinds of heinous crimes, and so I guess, I would say, yes they've crossed the line, I hope they enjoy hell. That's what I'd say. But the Lord says all that can be forgiven. And He is talking to religious people. These Pharisees are religious people. They are conscientious, they have high morals. They are careful in their life in every particular, but they do not want Jesus to be their Savior. And so in the evidence that He is their Savior, they rise up against that, they fight against it until they convince themselves that they are right, and the very One who came to save them, is the One they are rejecting, therefore, they can not be saved. That's what happens.

The danger for us is, we are religious people. Brothers and sisters, before I go on one step further, let me make an appeal. And that is, let Jesus save you. Let Him be your salvation, be conscientious in the context of being saved. Not in order to be saved, okay? Because when He comes along, conscientious people, they have a tendency to push Him away because they can do it on their own. Now it reminds us of the experience of Pharaoh, in the Old Testament that hardened his heart against God. The

attitude of contempt against Christ was such, that they rejected Him, and consequently the hope of eternal life.

1976 I attended an evangelistic series. It was a prophecy seminar. And during that, there was one whole presentation called, "The Unpardonable Sin." And I sat there listening, and the gentleman that was preaching said this, "you know, some of you have gotten new light; some of you have learned some things you didn't know before, and now God is asking you to act upon that light." And he said, "You know, according to the Bible, if you don't act upon that light, you are beginning to harden your heart against God. And the ultimate result of that will be, you will be blaspheming against the Holy Spirit."

How many of you have ever heard anything similar to that? Many of you have; I have some questions for you. The night that Nicodemus spoke to Jesus, do you believe he was under conviction by Jesus that he needed to be born again? Did he make the decision then? Three years later he made the decision. The disciples of Jesus walked with Christ for 3 and ½ years, when did they finally get it? At the resurrection, and maybe even a little after that, at Pentecost. But what about Moses; here Moses kills a man, thinking he is going to help deliver the Israelites, and he goes off and ends up being a shepherd for 40 years in the wilderness. He has 40 years to think about God. And God appears to him personally in this bush that's on fire, tells him to take off his sandals, it's Holy ground. And He says, "Moses, I am going to deliver my people. I want you to go back, and be my agent." What did Moses say? Not me! In essence he is saying, "You can't do that. You are not big enough God to use me."

Forty years, did Moses get it? No, it takes time; it takes time brothers and sisters. And just because somebody learns something for the first time, and we want them to make that decision in our time frame, it is not fair to impose upon them a guilt trip that if you don't do it now, at this time, you are setting yourself up to fight against the Holy Spirit. It takes time! Abraham goes to Pharaoh and says, "She is my sister." Isaac goes to Abimelech, he says, "She is my sister." Jacob goes to his father and says, "I am my brother." And with all of them, it takes time, and eventually they get it.

Now I read something that is probably one of the most difficult things that I've ever read to that date when I read it. It's in the book called, "Patriarchs and Prophets." It talks about the war that took place in Heaven. How there are a number of angels who really wanted to go back to God. You know what Lucifer said to them? "You've gone too far." They hadn't, but they believed him, and they went on into destruction. Reserved until the Day of Judgment, the Bible says. I can not think of anything more irresponsible than a pastor to stand up and tell people, "If you don't believe in the way I believe it, in a time frame I want you to, you are setting yourself up to be lost." Can you imagine, if that seed takes root in somebody's heart, and they are trying to work through some of these testing truths that we say are so important, and all of a sudden, the Devil is working on them and says: "It doesn't matter, it's too late. It's too late."

Brothers and sisters, to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, it's to be so hardened against salvation in Christ, you are not even going to want to be saved in Christ. You don't

care about being saved in Christ, that's why you got in that condition anyways. If anybody here cares one bit about salvation, one bit about serving God, you have not blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. You see!

What about suicide? Is suicide an unpardonable sin? Let me share with you why some people believe it is. They believe that any sin, not confessed can not be forgiven. And so if your last act is taking your life, you don't have a chance to confess that sin, so you can't be forgiven. I have news for you brothers and sisters; you have not confessed all your sin. You don't even know what sin you are committing now. Really, in the righteousness with God, compare us with that, we don't even know what sins we commit sometimes. So that's not a very solid foundation to build a theory around.

Another problem we have, you know modern medicine has created some ethical dilemmas for us. Well, they can do things scientifically now that couldn't be done 100 years ago, or 10 years ago even. And it's brought dilemmas. You know 100 years ago, you have somebody dying of cancer. You try to comfort them, and it wasn't long, and they were gone. But now we can keep them alive suffering for a long time. We can do that. And we have an ethical dilemma; I mean is that what we are supposed to do? Is it an affront to God if I am rattled with pain and cancer, and I know I am terminal, I know I am going to die, I've made peace with God, is it an affront to Him to beg Him to take my life? Would God be offended at that? And yet, the doctors right there, pumping more of what ever they do to keep me alive.

Now, I am not saying it's an easy issue, euthanasia and stuff like this, but I am saying it's not so black and white, brothers and sisters. Wanting to die because of pain? When my mother was dying of cancer, my sisters called me, they said, "Jerry what are we supposed to do?" They said, "She is only allowed so many patches of morphine, but she is still in pain." I said, "Cover her body! Who cares if she gets addicted to morphine 2 days before she dies? Try to get her out of pain." Last Spring, our dog, Leah, had cancer, walking along, she'd collapse and just howl and shriek in pain. I asked my son Joshua to take her out in the woods with his gun, and a shovel, and put her out of pain. I thought of it in an act of mercy.

It's a confusing issue, it's a difficult issue. What about suicide being an unpardonable sin? I have a question for you. What is the sin? Is it in the dying, or is it in the trying? What is the sin? Is it the attempt, or is it the actual death? Because I would tell you, I know people in this congregation and you know people in your life, and you read stories, they hold the trigger, the gun went click, but the bullet didn't fire. Six months later, they landed on their feet somehow, they got treatment, they got help, they found Christ, and now they are speaking of wonderfulness of living. But they tried to take their life. Is the sin in the attempt, or in the actual death? Now they live, they found God, and they are going to go to Heaven. What about the poor soul who doesn't live? Does God know what that person would have done, had they lived? Absolutely He knows what they would do.

You see, if you have a picture of God sitting in Heaven, He's got His glasses down here like this, and He is just looking at us and He says: "No, now, you cursed the

Holy Spirit, you are out, oh no, you are out, you are out.” Then I am telling you, none of us have a chance. But if you think of God as the way I think the Scriptures are, He is Holy, righteous and good, no question about it, but Heaven is a place he wants us, and He is doing everything He can to get us there. He is not trying to get you out, He is trying to get you in! And the people, who are going to be there, are going to be people; they don't understand everything theologically, but when they get there and they see God, they will not allow rebellion and sin to rise up again. Those are the people that are going to be in Heaven. And God knows whether that poor soul who is suffering here, maybe have chemical imbalances, all these difficulties, life just pressing, they take their life. God knows what that person will be through out eternity.

It is not the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Is not wanting God, is not wanting salvation, and attributing to God the works of Satan in order to justify not serving God. “Every manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men.”

A year later, we were at the camp meeting again. I was standing on the porch of a building where we had the early teen meeting, I was in charged of early teens again; I guess it had been a good year the year before. And I was there greeting the young people as they came. And this young lady came bouncing up the steps. “Pastor Arnold, do you remember me?” I said, “No, I am sorry, I don't.” She said, “I am Linda.” “Oh yes, I remember you Linda.” She said, “You know that night you thought me how to accept Christ,” she said, “I let Him in my heart, I began reading the Bible, and I began praying, my life was turned around. I got rid of the old boyfriend, I got new one, got a good job.” And she went on to describe how she is the youth leader in her church.

She tried to take her life. She cursed against the Holy Spirit. Linda is going to Heaven, and so can you because of Jesus. And I don't know where you are at today, it maybe you never let Him into your heart? It maybe you have, but you'd like a deeper experience. If you want to let Jesus into your heart, or if you would like a deeper experience, I am going to ask you to stand.

Father in Heaven, thank you! Thank you for such a Savior. We ask Him to come into our heart; we pray this in His name, Amen.