Ad Fontes, Week Ten: What Did Jesus Actually Say?

Chapter 9: What Did Jesus Actually Say

Adult Sunday School · **Grace Free Lutheran Church** · Valley City, North Dakota

Taught by **Larry Herzog Jr.** · Fall 2026

Week Ten

This week the question comes closest to the heart: not what an apostle taught, but what the Lord himself said. We look at three of his sayings where the manuscripts differ. One is a doxology we pray every Sunday. One is his prayer from the cross. One is a hard word about anger. Each lands differently, and none of them shakes the Gospels' witness to who Jesus is and what he taught.

How we will spend the next hour

Minutes	What we are doing
0 to 5	Opening and prayer
5 to 10	Report back: three sayings side by side
10 to 25	Matthew 6:13: "For thine is the kingdom"
25 to 45	Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them"
45 to 57	Matthew 5:22: "without a cause"
57 to 65	Three sayings, three landings
65 to 70	Assignment and closing

1. Report back: three sayings side by side

Saying	KJV	Modern Bibles	BSB
Matthew 6:13	"...deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."	Ends at "deliver us from evil" (or "the evil one"); the doxology is in a footnote or brackets	Ends at "deliver us from the evil one"; footnote: "BYZ and TR include For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."

Saying	KJV	Modern Bibles	BSB
Luke 23:34	“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”	Printed, but with a note or brackets saying some early manuscripts lack it	Printed without brackets; footnote: “Some manuscripts do not include” the prayer
Matthew 5:22	“whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause”	“anyone who is angry with a brother” (NET)	“anyone who is angry with his brother”; footnote: “BYZ and TR include without cause.”

- Which of the three surprised you most?
- Which one would be hardest to explain to someone in the pew next to you?

2. Matthew 6:13: “For thine is the kingdom”

This one touches our worship directly. We pray the doxology every Sunday. Yet most modern Bibles end Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer at “deliver us from evil.” (Luke’s version, Luke 11:2 to 4, has no doxology in any Bible, the King James included.)

External evidence

No doxology	A short doxology	The full doxology
Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (300s), Codex Bezae, Family 1, most Old Latin, the Vulgate	“For yours is the power and the glory forever”: the Didache (around AD 100)	Codex Washingtonianus (400s), the Syriac, and the great majority of later Greek manuscripts
Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian, who all wrote on the Lord’s Prayer and never mention it		

The Didache, an early church manual, shows the church was already closing the prayer with praise around AD 100. But it is not a copy of Matthew, and its doxology has no “kingdom” and no “Amen.” The doxology grew in worship, and only later was written into Matthew. The UBS editors rate the omission an A.

Internal evidence

- **Shorter and harder.** The prayer ending on a petition feels unfinished to anyone who prays it with a doxology. A copyist would add the familiar close; none would cut it.
- **Matthew’s own comment.** Right after the prayer, Jesus comments on forgiveness (6:14 to 15), picking up the fifth petition. He does not comment on kingdom, power, or glory.

Where this lands

The doxology is old, true, and beautiful. The kingdom, the power, and the glory are the Father's. It has been the church's answer to the Lord's Prayer since the late first century, and we will keep praying it. It is simply the church's response to the prayer, not part of the words Matthew recorded. That is not the Comma: the doxology has deep roots in the church's earliest worship. Different shape, different verdict.

3. Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them"

Of all the variants in this study, this one carries the most pastoral weight per word. It is Christ's prayer for those crucifying him, the model for Stephen's dying prayer (Acts 7:60) and for every Christian martyr since. And the evidence is truly divided. Take it slowly.

External evidence

Lack the prayer	Have the prayer
P75 (about AD 200), our oldest copy of Luke	Codex Sinaiticus (300s), first hand. A corrector bracketed it, and a later hand removed the brackets
Vaticanus (300s), and a corrector of Sinaiticus	Alexandrinus and Ephraemi (400s)
Codex Bezae (first hand), Washingtonianus, Koridethi, the fragment 070, minuscules 579 and 1241	The great majority of later Greek manuscripts (over 95 percent)
The Sinaitic Syriac, the Sahidic and part of the Bohairic Coptic, the Old Latin a and d	Most Old Latin, the Vulgate, the Curetonian and Peshitta Syriac
	Tatian's *Diatessaron* (170s), Irenaeus (about AD 180), the *Didascalia*, Hippolytus, Eusebius's canon tables

Both readings reach back into the 100s. P75 lacks it. Irenaeus, writing at about the same time P75 was copied or earlier, quotes it as a saying of the Lord from the cross. In the same century Hegesippus has James, the Lord's brother, die praying "forgive them, for they know not what they do," which looks like an early echo of Luke.

The case that Luke wrote it

- **It sounds like Luke.** "Father" on Jesus' lips and the language of forgiveness run all through Luke's Gospel, and so does ignorance as a ground for mercy (Acts 3:17; 17:30).
- **Stephen echoes it.** Luke wrote Acts too. Stephen's "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60) reads like a deliberate echo of his Master.
- **A reason to cut it.** Some early Christians read "them" as the Jewish people and may have balked at Jesus praying for their forgiveness. The omission shows up in Western witnesses, and the

Western text elsewhere has an anti-Jewish streak.

The case that it was added

- **The witnesses against it are early and widespread.** The oldest copy of Luke lacks it, and so do Vaticanus and early witnesses from Egypt, Syria, and the West. That spread is the strongest argument against the prayer.
- **A reason to add it.** A copyist who knew Stephen's prayer, or who knew this saying from the church's memory, might write it in. But Stephen's words are not worded like Luke 23:34, and copyists who harmonize usually copy wording, so this explanation is weaker than it first looks.

Where this lands

Honest scholars disagree. The double brackets in the Nestle-Aland and UBS editions mark the editors' judgment that the prayer was not part of Luke's original text, though it was added very early and deserves to stay where it stands. UBS6 rates the omission a B. Metzger's committee called it a saying that bears the marks of coming from Jesus himself. Other editors disagree: the Tyndale House and SBL Greek New Testaments both print the prayer as original. Scholars such as Joel Green and Nathan Eubank argue Luke wrote it, and our book sides with them. Here the King James, the Byzantine text, and our book agree, and defenders of the Byzantine text such as Maurice Robinson and James Snapp deserve credit for saying so all along.

What is not in doubt is the Christ it shows us. He taught, "pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:28). He promised the thief paradise (23:43). He committed his spirit to his Father (23:46). The Christ who prays for his executioners is the Christ Luke shows us on every page.

4. Matthew 5:22: "without a cause"

One Greek word, *eikē*: "without a cause" or "without reason." With it, Jesus condemns only unjustified anger. Without it, he condemns anger against a brother, full stop.

External evidence

Without "without a cause"	With it
The papyrus P67 (about AD 200)	A corrector of Sinaiticus
Sinaiticus (first hand) and Vaticanus	Codex Bezae, Washingtonianus, Koridethi, and the great majority of later Greek manuscripts
The Vulgate. Jerome noted that the accurate copies lacked the word	Most Old Latin; the Syriac and Coptic versions
The Ethiopic; Origen	Irenaeus in Latin, Cyprian, and most later fathers

The qualifier is early, but the oldest Greek copies lack it. The UBS editors rate the omission a B.

Internal evidence

- **The harder reading.** Condemning all anger against a brother is a hard word. A copyist whose conscience flinched could soften it with one word. No copyist would delete a softening word and put himself under a harder judgment.
- **It matches the other five "But I say to you" sayings.** Lust in the heart (5:28), no oaths (5:34), turn the other cheek (5:39), love your enemies (5:44): none of them has a loophole. "Without a cause" would make 5:22 the only one that does.

Where this lands

Here the older reading restores the Law's full edge. Anger against my brother stands under the judgment that murder stands under. That is the Law as a mirror: exposing sin and driving us to Christ. Luther teaches the Fifth Commandment the same way in the Small Catechism: "We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs." The copyist's softening was a kindness, but a costly one. The older text sends us, without excuse, to the only One who was never angry without righteousness, and who forgives.

5. Three sayings, three landings

	Matthew 6:13	Luke 23:34	Matthew 5:22
The evidence	Clear: the doxology came later	Truly divided	Clear: the qualifier came later
Why copyists changed it	Worship: they wrote in what the church prayed	Either cut for a prejudice, or added from the church's memory	Conscience: they softened a hard word
What we do	Keep praying the doxology as the church's response	Receive the prayer with reverence and keep the honest note	Hear the command at full strength and flee to Christ
What is secure either way	The prayer Christ taught	The Christ who forgives	Jesus' hard teaching on the heart

Notice the pattern. Copyists were not machines. They had eyes that skipped, but also consciences that flinched and hearts formed by worship, and all of that shows up in what they copied. That is why we follow the older, harder reading even when it cuts against us. And it is why the witness of all four Gospels together matters more than any single saying: the voice of Jesus comes to us through the whole record, not through one verse.

A note on Bart Ehrman

Ehrman stresses that copyists were active readers who sometimes changed what they copied. On Matthew 6:13 and 5:22 he is simply right, and we do not need to fear saying so. At Luke 23:34 he

reaches the same verdict our book does: he holds that the prayer is original and was cut by second-century copyists for anti-Jewish reasons. What does not follow is his larger claim that we cannot know what the text said. We just recovered two sayings of Jesus by the ordinary methods of this class.

For discussion

1. We will keep praying "For thine is the kingdom." How can something be right to pray and yet not be part of what Matthew wrote?
2. Luke 23:34 is truly uncertain. How do you feel about a question the evidence cannot fully settle? What steadies you?
3. Did "without a cause" ever give you permission you were glad to have? What does the older reading ask of you?
4. Copyists changed the text out of worship and conscience, not malice. Does that change how you think of them?

Working vocabulary, new this week

Add these to your vocabulary page.

Dominical. From the Latin *dominus*, "Lord." Having to do with the Lord Jesus, as in "dominical sayings," his words.

Doxology. A short word of praise to God, like "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

Didache. Greek, "teaching." An early church manual from around AD 100, with instructions on Baptism, prayer, and the Supper.

Liturgical addition. Words from the church's worship that found their way into the text of Scripture.

Eikē. Greek, "without a cause" or "without reason," the disputed word at Matthew 5:22.

Second use of the Law. The Law as a mirror that shows us our sin and drives us to Christ. (The first use is the Law as a curb on outward behavior; the third, the Law as a guide for the believer. See the Formula of Concord, Article VI.)

Before next Sunday

Read. Chapter 10, "The Verse-Numbering Ghosts."

Do this one thing. In a modern Bible, look for verse numbers that seem to be missing: Mark 9:44 and 9:46, Luke 17:36, Acts 8:37, Romans 16:24. Read each footnote. (In the BSB the notes sit on the verse before: 9:43, 9:45, 17:35, 8:36, 16:23.) Then read the same verses in a King James.

Bring. Your Bible, your notes on the missing verses, and your vocabulary pages.

Think about. Which saying of Jesus has shaped your life most? What would it mean to you if a manuscript question touched it?

A closing word

Thanks be to God for the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken once to his disciples and spoken still to us through two thousand years of careful copying. Thanks be to God for the Lord's Prayer, which we will pray today, tonight, and on our deathbeds, with the doxology and in faith. Thanks be to God for the Christ who prayed for those who killed him and who told us to do the same. And thanks be to God for a Law sharp enough to cut through our excuses and a Gospel wide enough to cover every sin it finds.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9 to 10 (BSB)

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Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), with the KJV and other translations quoted where the lesson compares them. Confessional citations follow the Kolb-Wengert edition of the Book of Concord.