

Get Your Third Class Tickets Here!

Scripture: Acts 1:6 – 14

June 25th, 2023

Have you ever ridden on a stagecoach? I think we all have seen people riding on a stagecoach in Western movies and shows. What we might not know is that the stagecoach had three different kinds of tickets. They had first class, second class, and third class tickets.

If you had a first class ticket that meant you could remain seated during the entire trip no matter what happened. If the stagecoach got stuck in the mud or had trouble making it up a steep hill or even if a wheel fell off, you would remain seated because you had a first class ticket!

If you had a second class ticket, you also could remain seated until there was a problem. In case of a problem, the second class ticket holder would have to get off until the problem was resolved. You could stand off to the side and watch as other people worked to solve the problem. You did not have to get your hands dirty. But second class ticket holders were not allowed to stay on the stagecoach. When the stagecoach was unstuck, you would get back on and take a seat.

If you has a third class ticket, you would definitely have to get off if there was a problem because it was your responsibility to help solve the problem. You had to get out and push or help lift the stagecoach to fix a broken wheel or whatever was needed because you only had a third class ticket.

Now, let us pretend that our Chapel is a stagecoach. As you entered church today you picked a 'ticket' out of a basket.

For today, your stagecoach employees are the driver of the stagecoach – Rotten-Totten Rosemary and the security for the stagecoach – Pastor Rich Remington.

Let us pretend that our stagecoach has gotten stuck in the mud. So let us check your tickets.

If you have a first class ticket please hold your ticket up so that Rotten-Totten Rosemary and I, Pastor Rich Remington, can punch your tickets. Remember that after we punch your ticket, you can remain seated as we try to push the stagecoach out of the mud.

(Punch first-class tickets)

If you have a second class ticket please hold your ticket up so that Rotten-Totten Rosemary and I, Pastor Rich Remington, can punch your tickets. Remember that after we punch your ticket, you must get up and head to the back of the church. You do not have to help push the stagecoach out of the mud but you cannot stay seated so that we lighten the load of the stagecoach. (Punch second-class tickets)

If you have a third class ticket please hold your ticket up so that Rotten-Totten Rosemary and I, Pastor Rich Remington, can punch your tickets. Remember that after we punch your ticket, you must head to the front of the church and stand behind the communion table. You do have to assist Rotten-Totten Rosemary and me, Pastor Rich Remington, as we try to push the stagecoach out of the mud.

(Punch Third-class tickets)

OK third-class passengers, let us try to push our stagecoach out of the mud. Put your hands out like you are pushing and on the count of three, make a pushing noise. (Redo three times then give each other high fives!)

Fortunately, the stagecoach is no longer a major means of transportation!

One of the problems the church is facing today is that we have too many people who think they have first class tickets. Such people expect to be catered to, waited on, and of course, pampered! These people expect everything to go their way and when things do not go their way, they get upset!

Also in the modern church we have a few people who think they have second class tickets. These folks ride along until a problem comes up and then they become detached spectators. They attend church on a regular basis but do not ask a person with a second class ticket to get more than nominally involved! They will not!

Thankfully we have some folks left in the church willing to travel with a third class ticket. We have some of our membership who are willing to get out and push when the going gets tough!

A story: A Pastor was talking with a man about joining the church. The man said – ‘I want to join the church because I want to be fed.’ The pastor replied – ‘Well, that’s fine, but we all would be better off if you would take off your bib and put on an apron!’ Obviously this pastor was getting tired of having members content with sitting in the first class section!

The Disciples of Jesus had third class tickets! They were the ones who were charged with the responsibility of telling others the good news of Christ. And there were some things Christ needed them to see and do.

The first thing to see is that Christian faith always looks outward. In some religions the emphasis is on looking inward. I call this 'navel gazing'. This is not the primary focus of New Testament Christianity. We are a people called to look outward.

Let us pause for a moment and look outward through our windows to the park next to our church or let us look out this side to our camp property.

Jesus challenges his disciple to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, and Samaria. Jesus challenges us to look outward to the ends of the earth! Jesus is calling us to go on a great adventure and to leave our homes and travel to the corners of this world proclaiming the good news of the Gospel. Let us look outward!

But we also need to look upward. Christ told his disciples to wait and pray. That was then, this is now. If we are honest about it, there is something about waiting and praying that goes against our culture. We do not like to wait for anything or anyone. We want immediate results with our satisfaction guaranteed or our money back. We want instant happiness. We want instant success!

We do not want to wait for the good life, we want it now! We want it immediately. And if we do not get what we want, we will look someplace else for it. Who wants to sit around and wait? Not I, how about you? Who wants to sit around and pray?

There is a peacefulness that only waiting and praying can give us. There is only a power that only waiting and praying can give us. That is what the disciples discovered. Prayer and waiting are necessary preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Followers of Jesus are to look outward and to look upward.

And finally, we must look forward. The apostles watched as Jesus was taken up to heaven in a cloud. They stood there looking upward at what had just taken place. Suddenly two men in bright white robes stood before them. They asked the apostles – ‘Why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, will return in the same way....’

Notice what happens next – the Apostles returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They met daily for prayers and they began to prepare themselves for what lay ahead.

Billy Graham once told of visiting an elderly man who spent most of his life in China as a missionary. This former missionary had always enjoyed good health and he was an unusually strong man. His deep dedication to Christ and his love for his wife made people love and admire him. He was a faithful witness!

Unfortunately, this former missionary contracted cancer which spread too many parts of his body. Billy Graham went to minister to him and to share words of comfort with him. Instead, the man witnessed to Dr. Graham. Billy shared this about their encounter – ‘There was a joy and radiance about him that I have rarely seen. He got up out of bed and walked me to my car when I left. I shall never forget my last glimpse of him. He had a great smile and gave me a cheerful wave good-bye and he said this to me – ‘Keep on preaching the Gospel, Billy’. Billy concluded his story by sharing this – ‘The older I get, the better Christ is to me!’

This would be the testimony of many Christians. Each day with Jesus is better than the day before. A Gospel tune shares these words – ‘The Good News for the day is that the best is yet to come!’

Jesus has gone away. He has gone up. His disciples received a promise that one day Jesus would return. That is an important promise! It says that this world is headed somewhere. It says that a third class ticket holder will one day see the fruit of our labors. It says that one day Christ will reign overall!

There will come a time when Christ will rule over all. In the meantime, let us look outward, let us look upward, and let us look forward!

Let us pray:

May we become the third-class ticket holders of this church. May we always rise to any problems or tasks this church has. Let us work together to serve Jesus Christ.

May we also look outward, upward, and forward for the day will come when Christ shall return. In the meantime, let us come to you O God in prayer on bended knees and thank you for your most Holy Son, Jesus Christ. AMEN.