



sermon notes

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Good News for a Thief

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Luke 23:32-47 (NLT) Selected Verses

Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him.

³³ When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice. ³⁵ The crowd watched and the leaders scoffed...³⁶ The soldiers mocked him, too...³⁹ One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!” ⁴⁰ But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? ⁴¹ We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” ⁴³ And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.” ⁴⁶ Then Jesus shouted, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!” And with those words he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, “Surely this man was innocent.”

Jesus’ Final Statements from the Cross

You may remember that the four gospels record Jesus making seven final statements from the cross. Three of the statements are found in Luke’s gospel and are only found in Luke’s gospel.

- A. “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” (v.34)
- B. “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (v.43)
- C. “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands.” (v.46)

“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”

I. Crucifixion

- First practiced in Persia, but the Romans perfected it.
- Purpose was to kill someone in the most humiliating and painful way possible.
- “Excruciating” has its root in “crucifixion.”
- Archeological evidence shows feet nailed to sides of cross.
- Victims stripped naked.
- Took place just outside city gates just off main roads in order to act as a deterrent.

II. Forgiveness

- One of the reasons Jesus was crucified is because He forgave sins and that infuriated the religious elite.
- “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Luke 5:21 (NIV)

- The cross is all about forgiveness and redemption.

III. On the Cross

- Jesus is standing in the place of the High Priest asking God to forgive the sins of all humanity.
- Jesus was also the sacrifice offered.

IV. Forgive “them”

- Luke does not specify whom Jesus is referring to.
 - I believe that He was referring not only to those involved and watching the crucifixion, but to you and me.
 - If Jesus forgives His executioners, can’t you believe that He will forgive you?
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V. One of the Criminals Mock and the Other Criminal Responds

- “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”
Luke 23:39 (NLT)
- “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? ⁴¹ We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.”
Luke 23:40-41 (NLT)
- “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”
Luke 23:42 (NLT)

“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

I. Today

- The big question: What happens after I die?
- Paul v. Jesus

II. Paradise

- Persian > Greek > English
 - The king’s personal gardens
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“Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands.”

I. Quote From the Psalms

- (Father,) *I entrust my spirit into your hands.* Psalm 31:5 (NLT)
- Jewish children were taught by their mothers to pray this prayer before bed.