

The Mercy of Christ to the Penitent Thief

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[0 : 00] Welcome to our service this morning. As we join together in the worship of God, we pray for his blessing upon our time together into the sound of this word.

We are going to begin singing to God's praise from Psalm 27. Psalm 27 and from the beginning of the psalm.

The Lord's my light and saving health, who shall make me dismayed? My life strength is the Lord, of whom then shall I be afraid?

When I ask mine enemies and foes, most wicked passions all, to eat my flesh against me rose, they stumbled and did fall. Against me, one host encamped my heart yet fearless is. Though war against me rise, I will be confident in this.

One thing I of the Lord desired and will seek to obtain, that all days of my life I may within God's house remain. That I the beauty of the Lord behold me and admire, and that I in his holy place may reverently inquire.

[1 : 18] For he in his pavilion shall me hide in evil days, in secret of his tent me hide, and on a rock me raise.

These verses of Psalm 27 from the beginning of the psalm.

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[3 : 28] Psalm 27 and from the beginning of the psalm.

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Psalm 27 and from the beginning of the psalm. Psalm 27 and from the beginning of the psalm.

Psalm 27 and from the psalm.

Psalm 27 and from the beginning of the psalm. upon our heart, drawing us to yourself and enabling us to have our mouth filled on high.

[5 : 41] We bless you and thank you for the words of the psalmist that speak of the security and the safety that belongs to your people, that no matter what their circumstances may be, that their God is the one to whom they can turn and upon whose name they can trust.

You are a place of safety for them, a strong tower to which the righteous flee and are safe.

And we give thanks for the fact that while we may as a generation know little of what it is to suffer through this peace that war brings, that there are of that number who bear your name in the world who appreciate that fact in their own turmoils.

Because in the world where we live there are constant reminders to us of the desperate wickedness that is in the heart of man that sees a brother rise up against brother, neighbor against neighbor, nation against nation.

And in the midst of it all your people are embroiled and ever thankful that they can rely upon a God who is the one who is peace without measure.

[7 : 28] And we recently read of the Lord Jesus saying to the storm be still. And the stillness that followed the command of his mouth was unequalled.

And so it is as you speak peace to your people. So they know that peace even in the midst of the troubles and trials that life brings.

We pray for your people today and ask for your blessing to be a portion to them wherever their loft is cast in the world.

Remembering in particular our own congregation here and those who form the body of believers within it. Those present and those unable to be present.

We commit them to your care and ask for your mercy to be their portion today. Not only just the mercies that are temporal but spiritual.

[8 : 39] Not only a knowledge of them as we all ought to have because your word teaches us that you are the God of measure even the God of all grace.

But to know them experientially as their portion today as they have a sense of being ministered to by the God who is their God.

We remember all who have met with us in this place even those who are still to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What your people have we pray that they too may come into possession of. While they may not fully understand or appreciate what is lacking in their life and even more so ignorant of what you people have that they do not.

May that ignorance be taken away and filled full of that knowledge that only possession of salvation through Christ can remove.

[9 : 55] So direct all our eyes to Christ today that we may marvel that his goodness and his grace his forbearance towards us here in this place who are so often guilty of neglect and forgetfulness of all that he has wrought on our behalf.

As the word of God teaches us that word that is often read by us and is often upon our lips it reminds us that he came into this world in the fragility of the infant child Jesus the vulnerability of a babe in arms the clinging to his mother's breast and yet at the very same time he is sovereign and that is something that was never taken from he is God over all he was there at your right hand through the endless ages of eternity he is one with you the God who is triune Father Son and Holy Spirit he is the God who created all things by the word of his power in the space of six days and all very good we bless you that all the attributes that are divine were his and yet for a time he was willing to forego the use of them in order to embrace the humanity that was necessary for him to suffer in a Roman state at the cross of Calvary so open the eyes of our understanding that we marvel that we may marvel at the infinite wisdom that lay behind the plan of salvation nothing was left to chance that we bless you and thank you

Father that not one sinner for whom he came will not be with him where he is when that day comes when he will have gathered together his jewels we pray that you would remember your people and that your hand in sickness today those confined to beds in home at home in homes for the elderly and the weak within hospitals depending on the care of others pray for those who are terminally ill and are knowledgeable of the impending end that is before them doctors have decreed that their time in this world is running out it may differ according to the wisdom that is on high but we know that seldom do these things change and for them we pray for grace in their time of weakness that they would always resort to the one who is the strong arm under which they may feel themselves born and carried so hear our prayers that the blessing of the most high be the portion of the needy today remember the grieving and the sorrowful those who perhaps are fresh today have looked at an empty place and whose heart has been pierced because of their grief and sadness perhaps their loneliness we remember them to you and ask

Lord that you would encourage them always to remember the one who is the widow's stay the one brother born for adversity the one who is known to have wept over the grave of a loved one we pray Lord that you would open her eyes so as to see you in her time of need we pray for your blessing upon the preaching and the proclamation of truth in this pulpit in the neighboring pulpits of our island those you have called to preach the word we pray that you would encourage them to bring your word to bear upon the hearts and minds of young and old alike pray your blessing on our Sunday school and all who bring the truth of God to the attention of our young may they in their youth come to a solid and a concrete knowledge of the truth that does not change the world has changed much since we were infants since we were youths but you have not changed your word is ever the same the world in which we live while it lies in sickness or even the sickness of sin that world is under your sovereign control that we give thanks that you are able to speak to us into our need in this world so bless us young bless those who take time to teach and instruct them encourage them in their labor we pray that you would remember the world in which we live that is confused and adores with your own truth remember us in mercy pour out your spirit upon us as a generation that we would turn as one with penitent hearts confessing our need of a

God who is able to save to the uttermost such as come to you by way of Christ continue to watch over his cleansing from sin in Jesus name we would ask it forgiveness of sin in him amen we're going to read from the scriptures of the new testament and the gospel of Jesus Christ according to Luke and we're reading from chapter 23 Luke chapter 23 and we can read from verse 26 we're taking up the reading where the Lord Jesus has been tried and found guilty and is being taken for the sentence of death to be carried out we read at verse 26 and as they led

[16 : 51] Jesus away they laid hold upon one Simon a Cyrenian coming out of the country and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus and there followed him a great company of people and of women which also bewailed and and but Jesus turning unto them said daughters of Jerusalem weep not for me but weep for yourselves and for your children but behold the days are coming in which they shall say blessed are the barren and the ones that never bear and the paths which never gave suck then shall they begin to say to the mountains fall on us and to the hills cover us for if they do these things in a green tree what shall be done in the dry and there were also two other malefactors led with them to be put to death and when they were come to the place which is called

Calvary there they crucified him and the malefactors one on the right hand and the other on the left then said Jesus father forgive them for they know not what they do and they parted his raiment and cast lots and the people stood behold him and the rulers also with them derided him saying he saved others let him save himself if he be Christ the chosen of God and the soldiers also mocked him coming to him and offering him vinegar and saying if thou be the king of the Jews save thyself and a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew this is the king of the Jews and one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him saying if thou be

Christ save thyself and us and the other answering rebuked him saying does that not thou fear God seeing thou art in the same condemnation and we indeed justly for we receive the due reward of our deeds but this man hath done nothing amiss and he said unto Jesus Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom and Jesus said unto him verily I say unto thee today shalt thou be with me in paradise and it was about the sixth hour and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour and the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst and when Jesus had cried with a loud voice he said father into thy hands I commend my spirit and having said this thus he gave up the ghost and so on may the lord add his blessing to a reading of his word and to his name be the praise boys and girls before you go to

Sunday school this morning in the gospel of Luke chapter 15 Jesus tells three stories three parables there's a parable about the lost sheep and a parable about the lost coin and a parable about the lost son or the prodigal son and I think today you're going to be thinking about the parable of the lost sheep and Jesus teaches there the preciousness of a sheep to a shepherd Jesus is a good shepherd shepherd that's the name that he most likes to be called by we have many shepherds in our villages some of them might think themselves to be good shepherds and some of them are but many of us are hobby shepherds were different to the shepherds that

Jesus knew because for them their sheep was their livelihood those who had sheep depended on them they lived with the milk that they got from their sheep and the meat that they got from their sheep and the wool the skins that they got from their sheep that was the way they depended for living so if they lost a sheep it meant a great deal to them so the picture Jesus draws to our attention is of a shepherd and he's got a hundred sheep and one of these sheep is missing and because of the value that he places upon the lost sheep he goes out to find it and he seeks it until he finds it and when he does find it he tells his friends the other shepherds and they celebrate together now maybe we don't understand the preciousness of a missing sheep we see too many sheep perhaps and we think they're nuisances they get in the way and some people

[22 : 50] I know would want them all to be sent somewhere in a far distant island where nobody would ever see them again but for the shepherd who has sheep that he loves and cares for every single one of them are important and that's the lesson that Jesus wants us to understand that he as the good shepherd speaks to those who are in the world as his sheep and he wants us to understand that not one of these sheep is unimportant not one of them deserves anything than his full attention and he teaches us that and sometimes we forget when we get when we look at numbers well some shepherds we know have got a lot of sheep but a whole host of sheep maybe several hundred so what's one what's one among so many if they are lost and if

I as a minister said well there's thirty or forty people here and I would like at least thirty nine of that forty to know Jesus you wouldn't think much of me if I thought well that's that's good odds Jesus doesn't want us to think like that he wants us to think like himself to understand that when he speaks to you and to me through his word he is telling us you are special to me and I would want you not to be lost but to be within my flock within the body of people who have my name in this world and I hope that you understand that that is why Jesus is speaking to us through the gospel through the Bible stories so that we get to know him and understand how special we all are to him we're going to sing now as you go out to

Sunday school from Psalm 51 Psalm 51 and at verse 14 to the end O God of my salvation God me from blood guiltiness set free then shall my tongue aloud sing of thy righteousness my close lips O Lord by thee let them be opened then shall thy praises by my mouth abroad be published for thou desirest not sacrifice else would I give it thee nor wilt thou with burnt offering at all delighted be a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice a broken and a contrite heart Lord thou would not dispense show kindness and do good O Lord to sigh on thine own hill the walls of thy Jerusalem build up of thy good will then righteous offerings shall thee please and offerings burnt which they withhold burnt offerings and with calves shall on thine altar lay these verses

Psalm 51 verse 14 to the end O God of my salvation God me from blood guilt in a O God of my salvation God may come from blood guilt in a set free in shall my tongue thy love sing of thy righteousness my close head red so are by thee let let be on the head then shall thou

I'll teach thy children, if I shall so, and I give it thee, nor will thou ever offer him at all in my journey.

[28 : 01] A broken spirit is to God, a pleasing sacrifice.

A broken heart upon thy heart, nor thine will not despise.

Show kindness and good, O Lord, to Zion, thy own hill, the walks of thy Jerusalem, whose thou hast built up all thy good will.

Then righteous, O Lord, shall be blessed, and O Lord, are there?

With all thy glory, and with God, shall on thy altar be.

[29 : 39] O Lord, O Lord, we can, for a short while, turn to the verses that we read in the New Testament Scriptures, the Gospel of Luke, chapter 23.

And we're going to read again at verse 42, the words spoken by one thief that was on the cross beside Jesus Christ.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, And verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

These words we understand to be a prayer. And I'm sure that when we think of what a prayer is like, we might think that these words don't really conform to what we think a prayer is like.

After all, where the prayer is offered, it's not a place that you would imagine a prayer to be heard.

[31 : 14] And the person offering the prayer, you wouldn't imagine that such a person would make such a prayer. A criminal, a malefactor, a thief.

And the prayer itself offered by such a person to another person who is himself dying. who is himself under the same accusation that he is a criminal, that he has committed some crime that is worthy of death.

And yet, we believe it to be a prayer. We believe it to be a prayer that is heard by the person to whom the prayer is offered, and not just heard, but also answered.

answered. And he gives an assurance that he has heard the prayer and answered the prayer. He says, Merrily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

[32 : 29] Whenever you hear the Lord Jesus utter such words, it is to be understood that he is making a promise, a commitment that whatever it is that has been asked of him, that he will undertake to fulfil that.

And that shouldn't surprise us if we think that the Lord Jesus, as the Bible teaches us and expects us to believe that the Lord Jesus is himself God.

and even though he is here in a place of weakness, he can still be identified as God.

In the Bible, in the Psalms, we come across a reminder to us of the words that speak of the commitment that God has given to those who offer prayer.

The psalmist there says, praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord. To thee all vows shall be paid.

[33 : 45] O thou that hear art of prayer, all flesh shall come to thee. Words that remind us that every living person that comes to God as they should come to God with petitions, with praise, with requests, that God hears them and God answers them.

And that's how it will be. The death of Christ Jesus on the cross is something that every one of us may understand something about.

We know that the Bible teaches this, that the history is contained within the Gospels. and we're familiar enough with our Bibles and with the Bible stories to know that this was how Jesus died.

He died crucified on a cross with two others beside him. and I want us today even understanding that you may be familiar with the story just to think a few thoughts arising I hope stimulate some thoughts in your own heart and mind about what we see taking place on the cross.

It's a solemn event. In many respects it's a gory event. the brutality that's brought to our attention here is really quite awesome.

[35 : 20] The wickedness that is carried out on the part of those who are punishing and carrying out the sentence of death on Christ is beyond the pale.

and yet however awful the events are it should not prevent us from thinking about what we are presented with here.

But I'm thinking in particular there's many things and I've preached a number of sermons on these events from different perspectives but my thoughts today went to the miracle of salvation that we see take place on the cross.

And it is a place where a miracle occurs. And I think that's what I want you to take with you whatever else you remember from what we speak about today I want you to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is someone who performs miracles.

And the greatest miracle that you could ever witness or experience is the miracle he carries out in the life of a sinner when a sinner comes from their sin to recognize him as a saviour.

[37 : 05] There's no greater miracle and there are many miracles that we can think of that Christ performed even the raising of the dead. It's a wonderful miracle but it's no less a miracle to have the spiritually dead risen from the grave of sin.

And when we look at this miracle taking place in the experience of this person I suppose without wanting to be flippant it is a miracle that that was a miracle at all.

That's it. It's a miracle that there was a miracle at all given the circumstances. Because we know that the passion that the Lord Jesus deals with at this time is in the last hour of his life.

We know what kind of passion he was. We know what kind of deeds that he had done and we know what kind of attitude that he had to Christ.

And yet he is the beneficiary of this miracle of salvation. We know the circumstances of Christ who is responsible for carrying out the miracle. And you would think that given the circumstances he would have more than enough to contend with.

[38 : 40] not just that he is dying on the cross but he is dying the death of his people on the cross. He is suffering not just the terrible pain of a crucifixion but he is suffering the wrath of God being poured out upon his head as the one who is bearing the sins of his people.

And you would think that would be enough to be going on with. without having to worry about this other individual. And yet that is what we have here. If we think of these facts for a moment we know that there were two thieves and yet only one of them prayed.

And I suppose this is where the difficulty lies. When we are trying to focus on a miracle performed by Christ in the experience of one individual when there is another individual to whom we can compare him.

And they are so alike, their backgrounds, their circumstances, and yet one person is the beneficiary of this miracle of salvation and the other is not.

we know that this person here with whom Christ deals acknowledges that he is rightfully in the place that Christ finds him.

[40 : 24] He says, do you not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation, and we indigestly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss.

There is in these words an admission of this person who is making the prayer, that he is suffering what he is worthy of receiving.

He is not denying it, he is not in any way belittling his death and saying, well I don't really, I remember reading somewhere an appraisal of the criminal community, those who are in prison, for crimes committed, and whoever was doing the study was of the opinion that no matter what the crime was, that the vast majority of those who were imprisoned would actually deny that they were rightfully where they should be.

Very, very few would actually say, well I'm here because I did wrong. Or if they actually admitted to being where they should be, they would always try and mitigate the sentencing and say, well it wasn't really as bad as they made out, the judge got it wrong, or the witnesses were not honest, or so on.

I think that, I mean this was an official consideration of what it was like to be incarcerated for crimes.

[42 : 24] The vast majority of it was considered would always refuse to admit to their guilt, even having been found guilty. but this person is not doing that.

He is not arguing for a miscarriage of justice. According to the account we have in Matthew's Gospel, both of them, prior to this, spoke disparagingly of Christ.

They both abused Christ. we are told that they cast it in his teeth. They were both crucified, one on either side, and they joined in with the crowd who were condemning Christ, in whatever way, whatever language that they used.

So both of these themes, both of these manufacturers were not just from the same background, but even at that last hour, it seems there was no difference between them.

Both of them mocked Christ. But a change happens. Something happened in the heart of one that meant that this prayer was offered.

[43 : 51] Now strangely, the Bible doesn't explain to us what happened, or how it came to happen. Maybe that's what you would want to find out.

What exactly happened that made this person who was on the cross, on the brink of death, change from being one moment somebody who condemned Christ, and abused Christ, and mocked Christ with everybody else, and all of a sudden, he not just, not only acknowledged his own guilt, but understood that Christ was somebody to whom he should go.

And maybe that's important to you. Maybe that's what's important to you today, that you want to understand why a person can change, or how a person can change, or what brings about a change.

You want to get to the science behind it, or the physiology behind it, or the psychology behind it, and you're saying, I need to know what makes that change possible.

And because it's a miracle, I can't answer you. I can't say to you why one thief changed and the other did not. But I can say to you that the change would not have happened were it not for the power of Christ in operation at that moment in time.

[45 : 29] And maybe you're saying, well that's not fair. That's not fair. It's not right. Is that what you're saying today? As you're sitting here beside people who you know to be professing Christians, and you're saying to these people besides you, it's not fair that you're a Christian and I'm not.

It's not fair that God has converted you and not converted me. It's not fair that God has in some way bypassed me or overlooked me in favour of somebody else who doesn't really deserve to be converted.

Maybe that's what you're thinking. Maybe that's the kind of argument you're making to yourself under your breath. Well, it wasn't because of fairness that this patient embraced Jesus Christ.

It was, I suppose, in many respects, when we look at it, a matter of choice. But it's not all choice, because the choice could only have been made with God's help.

But the facts are all the same. The situation is all the same. The sins were all the same. The need to acknowledge them was the same. The need that there was for contrition, for confession, for repentance was the same.

[47 : 08] And for a person who doesn't do it to say it's not fair, well, what's not fair about it? Could the other thief not have confessed sin?

Could the other thief not have repented of his sin? Could the other thief not have recognized Christ to be who he was? Clearly, he did not.

And he chose not. Some others stumble at this point and they say, oh, well, I believe that it's possible for a person to experience this change when they choose, at the time of their choosing.

There's a story told and very many people tell it concerning this passage of Bishop Ryle, who was spoken to by one of his congregation who was being challenged about his life.

And the man said, oh, well, there's always opportunity to come to faith. remember the thief on the cross.

[48 : 32] And Bishop Ryle's answer to him was, which one? Which one? There were two thieves and only one in the eleventh hour turned to Christ.

Christ. Yes, it is a miracle that prayer was offered by any one of them. It is a miracle that not both of them continued to deride Christ and abuse Christ and continue into death in ignorance of who Christ was.

I think there's a further miracle there and the moment, the more I looked at it, the more I thought of it. Given, you read this for yourself, please do, take time to read it.

It's not easy reading and if you feel unmoved by what you read then you're not reading it with any interest. But read it for yourself and you'll see there the immeasurable hostility that there was towards the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The viciousness on the part of those who were just spectating, the viciousness on the part of those who were not just responsible for guarding him but you see in their hostility the lengths they went to do harm to the physical body of Christ.

[50 : 09] Christ. And when you understand that and the concerted opposition that there was and this person prayed, this person prayed, even sensitive to that, seeing that, having part of this in his own heart for a time, and yet he came to pray.

And that's something we can't really, and we can't, we can't not try and think about because when we think about this miracle as a miracle, it is a miracle that this prayer was offered at all, in that kind of atmosphere, in that kind of situation.

you know, when I'm preaching today, I know that I'm not preaching to the converted. I know the majority of you are converted, but I know that some of you aren't.

And there are times when preaching the spirit of the unconverted touches my spirit, for whatever reason. And there is probably an apathy, that comes through, sometimes hostility.

But I sense it most when the balance of those present changes. For example, at a funeral, at a gravesite.

[51 : 49] That's when I, this is my personal experience, and I've heard many other ministers speak about it, when you're charged with speaking to souls who are looking into the grave of a brother, a sister, a companion, and you're charged with speaking to their souls concerning their own end.

What do you sense? What do I sense? Sometimes I sense apathy, sometimes I sense hostility, and it's a powerful, powerful thing that almost makes you feel, well, I can't speak into this atmosphere, I can't speak to this body of people.

But that's a minor issue compared to what we have here. We have a passion, high witness to what is around the cross, seeing the viciousness, sensing the hostility, experiencing it in his own heart.

And yet, in that atmosphere, a prayer is offered. A prayer is offered to Christ. Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

It seems impossible that such a prayer would come. A kingdom of this person who was there with a crown of thorns on their head, with a reed in his hand to mock him.

[53 : 35] A kingdom will soon be in the grave, yet the prayer is offered. It can't be but any miracle. I think it's a miracle also that this prayer was offered in the presence of the devil.

And you'll read this for yourself and you'll say, there's no place here for the devil. I can't find mention of the devil here. And yet, it is in this very theatre that the devil is at work.

How do I know that? Well, when you read about the darkness that surrounded the cross for hours, this is where the devil operates in the darkness.

But most of all, what I think makes me think that this is him with this grubby fingerprints all over it, you remember when Jesus was taken into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

He was forty days and forty nights fasting. And then the devil came to him. We're told the devil came to him. And the devil tempted him.

[55 : 06] And what did the devil do to tempt him? He asked him, if you are the son of God, command that these stones are made bread.

If you are the son of God, to come up to the pinnacle of the temple, cast yourself down and the angels of God will hold you up. What do we find at the cross?

Read verse thirty-five. And the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, he saved others, let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God.

In verse thirty-nine, one of the malefactors which were hung, railed on him, saying, if thou be the Christ, save yourself on others. If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

If. And there is no if about it. And yet this is him. This is what he is about. This is what he seeks to do.

- [56 : 27] Weak as he was, body broken as it was, the heavens close to him, as brass, crying out from that place of weakness, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
- And yet still, when the prayer is offered, he hears it and he answers the prayer. you know, sadly, too many people, who are the Lord's people, shy away from the house of prayer.
- They don't attend the prayer meeting. And yet it is the very place that they should be. And there's no excuse for them not being in a prayer meeting.
- There may be those who have legitimate reasons for not being there. God knows. But I know for a fact that there is one person who will try his utmost to keep you from prayer.
- And that is the devil. And it has been well said that while he keeps the people of God from the place of prayer, he will always be there himself.
- [57 : 55] He will always be there himself. And the Lord's people know that too. And yet despite his presence, the prayer is offered and the prayer is heard and the prayer very shortly will be answered.
- answered. How can I say that? Well, Jesus says he heard it. Today he says you shall be with me in paradise.
- All right, you say he heard it and he makes it obvious that he heard it. How do we know that the prayer is answered? answered. Well, I've already said it's a promise that Christ makes.
- And there's not one promise that the Lord Jesus Christ has given that he has not fulfilled. If you are interested, just read the gospel narrative of this.
- Just narrow it down for you. Read the narrative concerning the crucifixion of Christ and find out for yourself how often these words appear on the pages that the scripture was fulfilled.
- [59 : 18] God promised, God said, this is how it's going to be, this is how the crucifixion will occur, this is the sufferings that Christ will endure. God promised by the way of the prophets, not one single promise made, not one single prophecy given was overlooked.
- There he was, hanging between heaven and earth, and he cries, I thirst, and the psalmist said, this is the words of the Saviour. God's word is a word of promise to you and to me.
- Everything that he says will take place. Even the fact that he was to be crucified between two thieves. And I often think of this man's faith, and how this faith was tested.
- And there was a test placed on it, because this man, you see, he prays, and Christ hears the prayer, and in his answer he seems to indicate the power that he has to answer the prayer.
- And yet this person is exposed to the very death of Christ. how would you think this person to whom I'm praying has died?
- [60 : 44] I'm putting my soul in his hands, and yet he's dead. Is that not a test of faith? You know, in John's Gospel it tells us that the Jews came to to the soldiers, and they petitioned the soldiers, because they didn't want the bodies of Christ and his companions to be hanging on the cross on the Sabbath day, not just the Sabbath day, but the Sabbath day of the special feast, feast of occasion that we have there.
- so they asked to take down these bodies, and the soldiers obliged, and they said, what did they do? They went, and they broke the bones of the legs of both thieves.
- and they did want to do that. Well, the excruciating fact of the crucifixion is that when a person is hanging with nails through the legs and the feet and the hands, they bear the weight of their body down upon these nails, because the more they shrink down on their bodies, the more they are inclined to suffocate, to avoid suffocation.

You know, suffocation is a terrible thing. It's a more horrible death than the pain that the nails introduced into their experience.

So they would endure the pain of putting their hands and their feet bearing the weight of their body, so they wouldn't suffocate. it. So the soldiers came to hurry the end, and to prevent them doing this, they would break the bones of their legs.

[62 : 57] And when they came to the cross, they found Christ already dead. He had already given up the spirit. he had already yielded the ghost.

Into thy hands I commend my spirit, he said. So they didn't have to break his bones. And the scripture was fulfilled that not a bone of him would be broken.

But the two thieves, this was what happened to them. so the thief who would dare see the Christ die before his eyes.

He would hear him yield the ghost. And he would wonder what now of my prayer. When I was preparing this, I was remembering.

we've read this story, this account, don't we? We believe this to be a person who in the eleventh hour comes to faith in Jesus Christ.

[64 : 12] And his testimony is placed on record. An eleventh hour conversion. I believe all my heart that this man was converted.

I believe with all my heart that Christ fulfilled his promise and took him to be with him in paradise. But how many people are thinking of the eleventh hour conversion and it never happens or you never know of it happening.

I remember a person who I believe was a Christian. I'm quite convinced that he was a believer but he never met any profession of faith.

He never attended a prayer meeting and yet I believe he knew the Lord. And a lot of people were of the same opinion and they were thinking well, you know, what a difference it will make to the church to see this man before he dies before he dies.

He was making a declaration of his interest, confirming what we believe. deathbed and he didn't know me and he couldn't speak to me.

[65 : 45] He had suffered a massive stroke and he was completely incapable of making any deathbed declaration. Nobody goes to heaven on the basis of their declaration.

They go to heaven on the basis of their saving relationship with Christ. That's what's important. But it's also something that a person who has come to know Christ would want to do before they leave this world.

That they would tell the world in which they lived that a miracle has happened in my experience. I met the Lord and the Lord has saved me and I'm not ashamed to tell the world that.

What a saviour that is able to save even in the extremity that is before us here.

What a saviour. And that's what we have. Saviour to sinners no matter who they are. May you be one of them and may you know that this Christ is able to perform the miracle that will change your life.

[67 : 17] Like he changed the life of a renegade, a thief, a malefactor, whatever he was. Let us pray. ever blessed God, hear our prayer.

Our prayer is honest and earnest and we pray for every soul that is met here today that they would know the Lord, that they would seek the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul, and that you in your mercy would bring them to yourself.

we pray that you would answer our prayer hurriedly, for we can't wait for the eleventh hour, even though we may already be in that, and be known to ourselves, guide us in the time that you have allotted to us, to the food store of Christ, in his name we ask it, Amen.

And of closing Psalm is Psalm 84, Psalm 84, at verse 8. Psalm 84, at verse 8.

Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear, O Jacob's God, give ear, see God our shield, look on the face of thine anointed dear, for in thy courts one day excels a thousand, rather in my God's house, will I keep a door, and dwell in tents of sin, for God the Lord's son and shield, will grace and glory give, and will withhold no good from them that are brightly to live, for thou that art the Lord of hosts, that man is truly blessed, who by assured confidence on thee alone doth rest.

[69 : 10] Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear, O Jacob's God, give ear. Lord God of hosts, my prayer hear, O Jacob's God, give ear, sing, God, our Savior, through God's of place, O thine anointed ear, for Pip■, thy forth one day■■■■ hum o' o' good sing.

For God the Lord the Son and Shield He'll praise and glory give.

And where with all don't give from there that upright be to live.

For thou that are the Lord of all that man is truly blessed to I assure the confidence of thee our Lord the rest.

May praise and praise and God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all never and always. Amen.