

Good Friday, Luke 23:26–56

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[0 : 00] For our Father, we come now to your written word. And in this word, we are given the words of life.

! And so Lord, would you impart life, life that comes from the blood of the Lord Jesus. And so open our ears, soften our hearts, that we may hear the wondrous works of the Lord. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen.

It's safe to say, many of us, for many of us, we will never witness an execution. Few of us, if even given the choice, would watch if there were even such an opportunity.

There's something unnerving regarding the very thought. It's unnatural, possibly unnecessary, unsettling. For most of us, there is an aversion to it.

[1 : 11] Something not quite right about watching someone die. However, in the Roman Empire, during the first century, public death was made a spectacle.

It was a show, even a form of entertainment. If you're unfamiliar with the crucifixion account of Jesus, you may find it strange that there were many bystanders.

Quite a large crowd. Spectators. In the New Testament world, crucifixion was to be public. It was a way that the Roman Empire would say, we dare you to repeat this crime.

It was the empire asserting its power and authority. Luke's account, which was read, reflects the public nature of crucifixion.

There are various vantage points that we read or heard read. Simon from Cyrene, 800 miles from his home, was found in Jerusalem.

[2 : 17] Multitudes had filled the city because of Passover. Women apparently following, lamenting, and grieving. Rulers, soldiers, criminals.

Many people. Many eyes. Watched him die. And in the scheme of things, we need to understand, it was the most significant death in human history.

No death has more significance to the world. No death has more significance to you. No death has more significance to me.

No death has been meditated upon more. No death has been recounted more. No death has been announced more. No death has been more celebrated or lamented more.

No death has been studied or analyzed more. No death has more intrigue. No death has had more impact on humanity. No death has had more importance.

[3 : 27] It was a death like no other. And to clarify, you might think, well, Bing, others died in the same way.

Yes, he did not die unusually. Two were crucified alongside him. He was not the first to be crucified, nor the last. The place where he was crucified was not that significant outside the heart of the city of Jerusalem.

The timing happened to be Passover, which incidentally might have significance. But three dying men shared all these characteristics. They all died in the same way, in the same manner, in the same place, at the same time.

But there was something unique about the man fastened on that center cross. Who is this man, you must ask?

And why is he dying? The conversation that we're able to eavesdrop on is the conversation taking place between the three dying men suspended in the sky.

[4 : 35] It's a sobering conversation, given the condition that they're in. But it is one of the most precious portraits of salvation that you will find in all the Bible. The scene is arguably chaotic.

Mourners and lamenters likely remain. And from their cries would be the mockery of the crowd, the soldiers, scoffing, railing.

And amid all of that, what you will hear is a prayer. A prayer from the very lips of Jesus. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. The central cross held heaven's beloved son. And in this moment, heaven's son would cry out to his father, forgive. It's the first of seven utterances from the cross of Jesus.

[5 : 36] And here it is. It is a prayer of intercession for his enemies. A prayer. Those who sentence him to death are those he intercedes for.

Those who are his antagonists. Those who are his despisers. His haters. Those who want nothing to do with him. Are the very ones he prays for. He came to his own and they failed to receive him. Instead, they rejected him. Those that condemned him to die are the ones he asks God to pardon. The scoffers. The scoffers. The mockers.

The mockers. The sinners. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And this is the meaning of the cross.

It is the means of forgiveness for the guilty. It is the means of forgiveness for the rebel against God. The idolater. The self.

[6 : 38] The worshiper. The lover of self. If you want to know the heart of Jesus, then you must hear these words. Father, forgive them. In the death of Jesus, the guilty receive grace.

The evil doer is not met by enmity, but compassion. Jesus utters a prayer for pardon for the guilty. And this prayer is met by ridicule.

The son of God is laughed at. You can save others, but you can't save yourself. If you are the king, then deliver yourself. And one of the criminals, desperate for relief from his suffering, joins the taunts of the crowd.

Aren't you the Christ? The promised one? Then save yourself and save us. Deliver us is the demand. Surprisingly, the other criminal comes to Jesus' defense.

All three are under the same sentence of death. All three will die upon their respective crosses. But the second criminal recognizes the injustice of the situation.

[7 : 47] He and the other criminal are receiving what they deserve. But Jesus is not. Jesus is innocent, as later asserted by the centurion. He has done no wrong, for he is righteous.

The second criminal understands we belong here, but he does not. We're receiving justice, but he is not. We're receiving, we're rightly receiving what our actions have earned.

He is not. We're receiving justice. We're receiving justice. We're receiving justice. And mysteriously, the second criminal began to see things differently.

He began to see through the eyes of faith. The first criminal arrogantly demanded that, Jesus, you prove yourself. The second criminal humbly makes a faith-filled request.

The text is unclear how the second criminal came to see Jesus for who he was. Was it at the banner across the top of the cross?

[8 : 52] Here is Jesus, the king of the Jews. Did he come to recognize that fixated on the cross next to me is a king of a kingdom?

And if this be the case, then I would like him to be my king. And so he petitions, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Perhaps he heard those words of forgiveness, extended that prayer, those first words of the prayer of forgiveness. Could it be true? Though the Roman Empire could not forgive his crimes, could it be true that even a criminal in Jesus' kingdom could be forgiven?

Maybe he grew up in the religious climate of Jerusalem. And he heard of this Jesus, this Jesus, given the name above every name.

This Jesus was given that name for he would save his people from their sins. And so the request is made, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[10 : 06] And it's followed by a promise. A promise. Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. The promise that when the criminal breathed his last, he would be present with the Lord.

And here is the most vivid picture of the good news of the gospel. A condemned criminal in his misery bows his head towards his majesty and is met by mercy.

That is the clearest picture of the gospel. A criminal worthy of death. Condemned to die. Guilty.

In his misery bows to the king of Israel. Not only the king of Israel, but king of the world. Bows to his majesty and is met by mercy.

You see, this is the gospel. We are guilty as charged. Imperfect in all our ways. Selfish in all our motives. Rebels to God's rule.

[11 : 20] Well deserving of God's just wrath. And while suspended figuratively from the cross that you and I deserve, you see heaven's son.

And you may see him like the text sees him. Pitiably. Powerless. Pathetic. Unwilling to come off the cross.

But he's unwilling. Not unable. He's not inadequate. He's unwilling to come off the cross. For in enduring its shame, he secures your very salvation.

It was a death like no other. The prayer of Jesus is for the wicked to be forgiven.

The promise of Jesus is to those who turn to him in faith. Securing his eternal presence in paradise.

[12 : 26] Hear these words of Jesus. As he hangs between heaven and earth. Pleading for the sinner to come.

Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. And for every sinner that comes in faith. He promises. Perhaps not today.

Maybe not tomorrow. But one day. Paradise. His presence. Forever. Three men died that day outside of Jerusalem.

One of them learned. There is a fountain. Filled with blood. Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

And sinners plunged. Beneath that flood. Lose all their guilty stains. And that one individual. That dying thief. The hymn writer writes.

[13 : 30] Rejoice to see. The fountain in his day. And there may I. Though vile as he. Washed all.

My sins. Away. Father. We come to you tonight. And.

We desire. There were two thieves there. And only one. Receive that offer of forgiveness.

By faith. Lord I pray that. In this place. That many by faith. Would reach out.

To the Lord Jesus. And his offer of everlasting life. By faith. And trust him. For the salvation that he offers.

[14 : 29] And receive him. For the life that he is able to impart. And follow him. All the days of our lives. And one day. Meet that thief.

In that place. Where the son. Of God. Reigns. Do that work in our lives we pray.

We ask these things for his namesake. Amen. Amen.