

Lord Remember Me!

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Preacher: Rev Bob Sinclair

[0 : 00] I'd like us to turn once again to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 23, reading again at verse 42.

And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And he said unto him, Truly I say unto you, today you will be with me in paradise.

Lord, remember me. Lord, remember me.

Lord, why am I changing the word to Lord when the Bibles we have before us say Jesus? Well, I looked at the version we used to have, the authorized version, and there it's Lord.

And I also looked at the Gaelic rendering, and that also suggests the word is Lord. And so that's the text I'm going to be using here.

[1 : 13] Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. All the Gospels tell us that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

And that he was crucified between two thieves, and Jesus was in the midst. Now this implies that the crime that Jesus was accused of, and which he had been found guilty of, was the greatest. But perhaps a simpler explanation might be that he simply took Barabbas' place. And yet there is something more than that at play here.

Whatever human reason there was for putting the Lord there, Mark quotes from Isaiah that God's hand was in it.

Scripture was fulfilled, and he was numbered with the transgressors. Isaiah chapter 53 foretells how the Lord would be taken and reckoned with sinners, and how he would be crucified.

[2 : 38] Nothing could express more clearly how the Lord was despised and rejected of men. That he was classed amongst the transgressors, and even deemed to be the chief of those transgressors who was there crucified.

But while all the four Gospels mentioned what happened, only the Gospel of Luke relates this particular story to us.

About the conversation that took place between the two thieves and the Lord Jesus Christ. So first we see there were two other malefactors with him.

In verse 32. These men were not petty criminals. Barabbas, who in a doubt was their leader, had been guilty of insurrection, rising up against the state, and also of murder.

So these other thieves, or these malefactors, were also part of that same group. They were not petty criminals. They were hardened criminals. They were hardened criminals who were being put to death for the lifestyles that they had engaged in.

[3 : 58] They had been forced to walk the same streets that the Lord Jesus Christ had walked. They'd seen him stumble. And they'd seen him crucified, where Barabbas should have been crucified.

They looked on as he was mocked and ridiculed. Deserted by his friends. Seemingly smitten of God and afflicted.

Someone who seemed to be cursed by the universe in which he lived. And so they came to add their voices to the jaunts, the taunts, and the jeers.

All those that were around. The scribes and the Pharisees and the rulers. These men, they, under the same condemnation, add their voices to all that's going on here.

All that's being thrown at the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark tells us that they that were crucified with him, reviled him. And as the whole episode reached its climax, their voices joined in that great baying for Christ's blood.

[5 : 23] And the ridicule and the mocking that was leveled at him. Some shook their heads at him, crying, he saved others. Himself, he cannot save.

Some went even further. Saying, he trusted in God. Let him deliver him now, if he will have him. For he said, I am the Son of God.

Two thieves heard it all. And in their pain and discomfort, not only did they hear it all, they joined in with it. They joined in with the blasphemy.

They joined in. With the mocking. With the ridicule. They picked up on the words that they were hearing round about them. And they flung them at the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we see first of all that there were two malefactors there. Who were reviling him. One of them, which was crucified, railed on him saying, If you are the Messiah.

[6 : 36] Save yourself and us. But the other answering him says, Do you not fear God or do you not even fear God?

He knows there's no reason to fear man anymore. Men are doing the worst that they can possibly do to him. And so he asked the question, Do you not even fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?

As these verses demonstrate. At the beginning, both the thieves joined in the mockery and the ridicule of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their attack against the Lord. But in the end, there was only one, this one, who called out and said, If you are the Messiah, save yourself and us.

He was where he deserved to be. For the life he led. For the crimes he'd committed. And this thief was where he deserved to be. And he hated the man of sorrows.

[7 : 55] There's not the way with the world as a whole. And they have no real antagonism against all the false gods and the false worship that goes on.

But speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. And hatred appears. Hatred against the Prince of Peace. Against the Saviour of this world. Why? Because their lives condemn them as they look at him. And they don't want to look at him.

They want their lives rather than Christ. Father said, this first thief was where he deserved to be.

But the Lord Jesus Christ, when he was reviled, reviled not again. He didn't answer them back.

There was only an hour or two between this man and eternity.

[8 : 57] And yet, there's only hatred. There's only these words of condemnation against the Lord Jesus Christ. There's only words of cursing the Messiah.

You know, if there'd been one word of sincerity in this first thief. His words were words which would have made him seek a salvation that is in Christ Jesus.

And would have been turned into a prayer. But it's taught, are you not the Messiah? Why don't you save yourself and us?

They could so easily have become words of pleading that he would save them. But we hear nothing more about this first thief until the guard came to break his legs.

And he passes from the narrative with these words of anger. Looking at this narrative, there's one verse which talks about the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10 : 15] Forgive them, Father. But they know not what they do. And that prayer of forgiveness was very powerful in the words, in the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And perhaps, and there's only a perhaps, perhaps he fell silent. Because the power of the mercy of God in Christ was even working on him.

But we hear nothing of him after his remarks. And as he lived, so he died. And there was another thief. And there was another thief.

Another man. Who for the time had been happy enough to join in with his colleague and all the jibes and the taunts. And the mockery that were leveled at the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, by the mercy of God, he was to become the voice of compassion and encouragement and to a forsaken Savior.

[11 : 46] There was no other voice of compassion spoken on that day. But the voice of the voice of the voice of the man.

And so he asked his fellow criminal, do you not even fear God? No doubt God reminded him to think of the moment he'd have to stand before him, as we all will.

We all have to be reminded. Believer and unbeliever, there will be a day when we shall have to stand before God. And answer what we've done and what we've said.

And how we've behaved. And how we've loved. As he began to see the insaneness, the insanity of dying men cursing God and mocking a dying man when they were in the same condemnation.

It makes them acutely aware of the pressing necessity to repent and to share that need with his fellow thief.

[13:05] Christ's prayer, again, taking effect. We often talk about that prayer taking effect in the life of the centurion.

And he says, truly, this was the son of God. But that prayer also takes effect, certainly, in the life and experience of the repentant thief.

And perhaps even, I'm suggesting, in the one who fell silent after his colleague rebuked him. And so, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, this man is brought to see that he is being crucified justly. And that this man beside them has done nothing amiss. The frank reality of his confession is quite remarkable. Turning from someone who is cursing God and reviling Christ to someone who is now totally looking to Christ for mercy and hope.

Have they accepted that God would be his judge? He goes on to admit his guilt before God.

[14:35] Oh, we are righteously condemned. Others had seen him raise the dead. And they hadn't believed.

Think of those who mocked him when he was going to raise the widow of Nain's son. But he was a man who was seeing him dying. And yet, he believed. And then fixing his eyes on Jesus, he says, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

He'd paused for a moment after rebuking his colleague. And turned all his thoughts to Christ.

You know, he was the only one on earth at that time who could see the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not his disciples.

Not his disciples. Not their beloved disciple, John. None of those who had followed him and seen all his miracles. None but this thief on the cross.

[15:54] Who calls him Lord. The same words they would utter as Thomas would offer. My Lord and my God.

And so here he calls him Lord. He may only have been able to see Christ through the fog of his own pain and agony.

But his faith was now better formed than many who sat at the Lord's feet throughout his ministry.

He'd read the words in Jesus of Nazareth.

King of the Jews. That's what it says in the Gospel of John. In Jesus of Nazareth. King of the Jews. And he risked all to remind him of his throne.

When the cross seemed to put a lie to any kind of kingdom. He no doubt heard the words of mercy.

[17:04] Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do. Perhaps he didn't realize it. But they were certainly taking effect in his own experience.

And those words that taught him to look beyond Golgotha. To look beyond what he was suffering. To Jesus.

And so he says, remember me. He didn't ask for forgiveness. He didn't ask for deliverance from the situation that the first thief had asked for.

If you be the Christ, save yourself and us. He simply asked that the Lord would remember him. He was content to ask for an interest in the kingdom the Lord was going to establish.

Lord, remember me. That would include all things. Would include forgiveness. Acceptance. Acceptance.

[18:16] Fellowship. All things that were part and parcel of being in his kingdom. And then finally the Lord says, Verily I say unto you, Today you shall be with me in paradise.

See how indefinite the thief's request was. Remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And the Lord says, No, today you will be with me in paradise. During all the mocking and the ridicule the Lord had endured.

While he was being crucified, he said nothing. Even as a lamb before its shearers is done. So he was silent. But he couldn't stay silent.

At this word. He couldn't stay silent. To this cry. Of this fellow sufferer. And even though it was a cry at the eleventh hour.

[19:23] The Lord would no wise cast him out. There were very few acts of kindness. Done to Christ that day.

He read of. One there. The women. Who were weeping for him. On the Via Dolorosa. On the way to the cross. And he says, Weep not for me.

But weep for yourselves. And weep for Jerusalem. He knew all that was going to happen there. But the kindness of the woman weeping for him. He also received that.

The kindness of the soldier. Who offered up. A sponge. To quench his thirst. There were the women.

Standing at the foot of the cross. His mother and. His mother's sister. And Mary Magdalene.

Standing at the foot of the cross. Being with him. Simply to be with him there. And.

[20 : 26] Endure. His pain. With him. Friends. Not. But none of them was so welcome as this man's prayer.

Reminding the Lord when no one else could. Not even his heavenly father. Reminding him that he. he was Lord, he was Jehovah and that he had a kingdom.

Why couldn't his father answer him at this time? Why was the cry on the cross, my God, my God why you forsaken me, not answer it? Because he had been put to the far country.

He had been put out of the realm of comfort and compassion. And the father who is of purer eye than to behold iniquity, could not relate to him, could not answer him, could not look on him.

It was the thief's words that comforted him. We heard last week about the sinner's apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Well, I spoke earlier on about the Lord's petition.

[21 : 42] Father, forgive them. Well, here was a man who was coming to know in his own experience what repentance unto life really was.

Seeking Christ because he had an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. The hope that just perhaps that this was a way he could be forgiven.

But in spite of all that he had done, in spite of all that you and I have ever been or done in our lives, God in his mercy will pardon and forgive.

Some of the writers of old have said the mercy of God optional. He doesn't have to forgive, but he desires to forgive. Because in Christ Jesus, he has found that way of whereby he might forgive.

It reminds us so much of the prodigal in the far country thinking of his father's servants.

[23 : 07] They had enough to eat when he was starving. And hope begins to rise in his heart.

While he perished with hunger, a hope was kindled in the prodigal's heart, as a hope here was kindled in the heart of the thief.

And he chose Christ. It's one of the great truths of scripture that it's not our morality or our sinless life that's going to win us any credit with God.

It is all God's mercy. It is all God. All of God who remembers us and brings us to himself.

We read that all things are of God who reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ reminding us that the initiative of salvation is in Christ.

Same chapter says we beg you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. For God is by Christ reconciling the world to himself.

[24 : 38] Why is it Christ? Because we can't do it. We can't reconcile ourselves to God. we can't reconcile ourselves to the offended one because there's nothing in us by which we can be reconciled to God.

It has to be Christ. And so God establishes the way whereby we can be reconciled and that's only through the Lord Jesus Christ. Only through what he has done and what he has accomplished for us and for our salvation.

And so it reminds us that the initiative in salvation is always taken by God. Although the controversy in the beginning was caused by man yet the initiative in the salvation beginning way back in

Genesis 3.15 in that gospel promise the seed of the woman shall crush the head of the serpent so also he takes the initiative in our salvation bringing us to a knowledge of Christ into a saving knowledge of Christ whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for our salvation.

The Lord knew that the thief had hardly dare ask for anything else but a remembrance in Christ's coming kingdom.

Remember me when you come into your kingdom again that indefinite aspect of it but the Lord says it's going to be immediate it's today not going to be some time of purgatory or some lengthy period between death and the entrance into the kingdom it's going to be immediate the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory that's what the promise was to the thief there on the cross like the prodigal hoping against hope and receiving everything that he hoped for the kiss the shoes the cloak the ring all things for the

[27 : 25] Christian forgiveness pardon reconciliation redemption fellowship throughout the endless ages of eternity the Lord knew that the crowd would soon forget the thief forget his name forget who he was and even his own family would be quite glad to disown him perhaps even before he died they didn't want to know who he was but Christ welcomes him Christ wants him today you'll be with me in paradise when the Lord says paradise he means the glory he had with the father before the world was when we think of paradise we think of the paradise that was of

Eden where God walked in the garden the cool of the day with Adam and Eve place where all things were new and all things were very good sun scrutiny got big those whom you have given me, be with me where I am.

And the glory I had with the Father before the world was. Both the malefactors, both the thieves, were crucified together.

They hung one on each side of Christ. They saw and heard all that took place. Both in desperate need.

Both having the same opportunity. One saved, one lost. One dying, cursing Christ.

[29 : 45] One asking that he be remembered. Will you not today, even in the peace of your own soul and the circumstances in which we find ourselves this evening, will you not also make that simple prayer?

Lord, remember me. May the Lord then bless these thoughts to us. We shall conclude our worship now by singing to God's praise in Psalm 143, the second version of that psalm, at verse 6.

Lo, I do stretch my hands, to thee my help alone, for thou will understand all my complaint and moan.

Sing down to the end of the verse, marked 8. There are three double stanzas to God's praise.

Tunes, heba. Lo, I do stretch my hand, to thee my help alone, For thou well understands all my complaint and moan.

My thirsting soul desires and longeth after thee.

[31 : 23] As thirsty ground requires, with rain refreshed to thee.

Lord, let my prayer prevail, to answer it makes me.

For lo, my spirit hath fail, hide not thy face in me.

Lest I be light to those that do in darkness fit.

O'er him the downward goes, into the dreadful edge.

[32 : 23] Because I trust in thee, O Lord, cause me to hear, O'er him the way, when morning doth appear.

Cause me to know the way, where in my heart should be.

For why, my soul on high, I do live up to thee.

And now we pray, O Lord, that you would bless the meeting that is to follow in the hall for the young people. We pray you would bless them in that meeting. You bless the food prepared for that meeting.

And ask, O Lord, that in this time together, That they might each grow in your grace and in your knowledge. And now may grace, mercy and peace, In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, Rest on you and abide in you, now and always.

[33 : 45] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.