

Behold the Forgiving Savior

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[0 : 00] If you are there in Luke, and if you close your Bible, go ahead and turn back there. I'll give you a second to find your place again. I've got to get mine open here. You know, as we're thinking about Luke, as we're thinking about the cross, you know, the cross is the answer to the most universal problem that humankind faces.

You see, I think we could point out a lot of different problems in the world. There's probably one that's coming to your mind right now. And maybe it's not a global problem. It might be a global problem. It might be a local problem to, you know, the people you know, or even in your own life, that there's some need that you have.

There's some need that people have. There's some need that the world has. But the most universal, core, foundational problem is the problem of evil, the problem of sin.

In fact, if you start out reading in the beginning of the Scripture, you come to the book of Genesis. And in the first few pages, God creates everything perfect. And then what happens?

Talk to me, what happens? They sin. They sin. And it's like God creates everything just right. Everything's in place. It's kind of like if you clean the house up and everything is exactly where it needs to be.

[1 : 14] And then the kids come into the living room. And then pretty soon it is no longer as it should be. It is absolutely destroyed. And there's snacks everywhere.

And there's stuff that's pillows that are in disarray. Everything becomes a problem. That's kind of what happens except on a much, much, much bigger scale. God creates everything perfect. Man disobeys God.

And the whole of creation, the whole world, is touched and marked by evil. There's a lot of names that we would call it. It's disobedience.

It's called sin often in the Bible. It's called iniquity. But I think we could just simply call it evil. That we've been affected by evil. And we've also perpetrated evil.

And that is how the Bible presents humanity. As a people that have been completely, their lives have been touched and shaped and marked by evil.

[2 : 12] And we need someone to do what we cannot do for ourselves. Because here's the thing about human history. We can go through and you can find attempt after attempt after attempt to fix things.

To fix problems. You think about, what do they call that? Like people trying to create a utopia. They take a philosophy about how the world should work.

And they try to get everybody on board with this philosophy about how the world should work. To create a utopian place that relieves us from suffering and pain and evil. But those always end up in something we call dystopia, right?

Where it's like it should be perfect. It's aspiring to be perfect. But it always fails. Why? Evil. Evil. It's at the root of this world. This creation has been marked by evil.

So we need someone to do something that we cannot do for ourselves. And that's where Jesus comes in. You see, we need forgiveness. We need forgiveness.

[3 : 15] Is this not something that you've even experienced in your own life? That as hard as you might try to rid yourself of evil.

To become perfect. To do right. There is always something there. It's like it's at the very core of our being.

Where there is sin. There is iniquity. There's shame. There's defeat. Because as hard as we might try to always do right and never do wrong.

We've all sinned. The Bible puts it this way in Romans 3.23. This is a verse that many would be familiar with. But would you consider this with me? You see, I think when we come to Luke. Luke is trying to show us that Jesus, he's the answer.

He is the forgiving Savior. He wants us to look. He uses the word behold a number of times. He says the people were beholding. They were looking at this scene called the cross. And some saw Jesus for who he was.

[4 : 17] We're going to talk about that thief that was crucified with him in just a second. Others, they looked upon the scene. But they didn't see who he was. But this morning, you have an option.

You can look at the cross. You can look at this scene. And you must make a decision about who Jesus is. And what Luke is trying to show us. He is the one. Jesus is the one that will forgive your sin.

Romans 3.23. It puts us in this place. It says that we have all fallen short. We've all come short of the glory of God. Now, there's, you may, I've heard this so many times.

And it grates on me a little bit. Because I think a lot of times we don't, we're not realistic. We're not honest about how flawed humanity is.

You ever heard somebody say this? I know I'm not perfect. But I'm pretty good. Right? That's kind of the idea. I'm not perfect. That's an unreasonable expectation. I'm pretty good.

[5 : 15] But see, the thing is, in the scripture, the standard is perfection. And it might feel like that's like, man, that's God. That's an impossible standard. How could I ever meet that standard?

Well, the scripture tells us we can't. And that is the reason that we are here in Luke 23. Because you can't meet the glory of God.

The brightness, the majesty, the beauty, the honor, the perfection, the sinlessness of God. All that is contained in that statement. The glory of God. We've all fallen short of that.

We've all messed up. So we need somebody to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And that is somebody that would offer us forgiveness. Somebody that would give us a pardon.

You know, growing up, I want to tell you a little bit of my testimony a little bit later on. But keep that in mind as we study this. We need forgiveness.

[6 : 14] Would you look there with me again in Luke 23? And with all of that in mind about how Luke, he's trying to present to us this forgiving Savior. Let's read once again starting in verse number 33.

Scripture says this. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him. Now, I want to pause there for a second. Because those few words that we just read.

There they crucified him. Please don't forget what is entailed. What makes up that statement that they crucified him.

I'd like to ask the gentleman in the back to play a quick video. And this is just like 90 seconds. But think about those words for a second. Listen to this video. There they crucified him. Gentlemen.

There they were.

[7 : 32] Oh! Oh! Oh!

Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh! Ellie!

Ellie! Llamas of Denny! Oh! Oh!

Mush-lama! Friends, that was one afternoon contained in those words.

They crucified him. They took Jesus, and we've already studied about how they beat him. And they led him up that hill called Golgotha or Calvary, the place of the skull.

[8 : 57] And there they crucified him. Now, as we continue reading, it's almost like we have to take all of these things and load them into our memory banks. Otherwise, we can read over this and it won't make sense.

We won't see what Luke is trying to get us to see. Would you continue reading with me? 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. I want to encourage you to mark that perhaps in your Bible.

Because in Luke, there's three statements that Luke records from the cross. And this is the first. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Now, can you imagine with me for a second, Jesus saying these words after they have nailed him to a cross.

After they have beaten him. After they've spit on him. After they've mocked him. After they've falsely accused him. After he's been mobbed and they're yelling out, crucify him.

[10 : 12] After all of that, Jesus, on the cross, he says, Father, what? Say it with me. Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.

That's, the more I think about that, the more that is absolutely unimaginable. You know, there's, you ever been in the situation where you are trying to offer somebody, you're trying to offer somebody help.

But they don't want help, right? It's like, hey, can I help you carry that thing? But they're like, no, no, no, I got it. I got it. I can handle it. And they end up getting a little testy.

Like, no, I really don't want help. Leave me alone, right? Or something like that. You ever had that happen? Maybe not. Maybe this is just what happens to me. They don't want help. And so, I don't know about you, but me, I'm confessing here a little bit.

Sometimes I get a little indignant. Fine. If you don't want help, handle it yourself. You don't know what you're doing, and you're probably going to hurt yourself trying to carry that when you should just let me help you.

[11 : 19] I'm right here willing to help you. Like, I'm ready to help you, but you're getting a little angsty with me. Fine. Deal with it yourself. If anybody could do that, Jesus could do that.

He's right there. He is dying to save them. They're the ones who are attacking him, crucifying him, killing him. And even in that moment, he responds with kindness.

He responds with compassion that he would say to the... He would say, he would pray to his father. Father, forgive them. There's some synonyms maybe we could use there.

Father, release them from this guilt. Father, pardon them. They don't know what they do. Do you see the forgiving Savior? If you want to... If you take notes and you want to write something down, here's the first thing that I believe Luke wants us to see.

Jesus offers forgiveness to all. Jesus offers forgiveness to all. He offers forgiveness even to his enemies. And that's what makes Jesus so wonderful. Is that he offers forgiveness to all.

[12 : 28] You see on the cross in this scene where Jesus, he's on the cross, he's saying, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Would you continue reading with me in verse number 34? They parted his raiment.

They cast lots. The people 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. 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. Imagine those words.

They're not really expecting Jesus to do anything. They're basically like provoking him, poking fun at him saying, All right, you said you were this.

You said you were that. Well, if you're really that, then why don't you do something about this? And aren't those words just so powerful where he says, If you are the king, save yourself.

[13 : 27] If you're the savior, why don't you save yourself? But what they didn't understand was that by Jesus remaining on the cross, Dying in that horrible, gruesome way, he was saving them.

The very ones who were mocking him. And that's why Jesus, he offers forgiveness. He stays on that cross. He offers no resistance. He shows no resentment.

Jesus, he offers forgiveness to all. What does the statement show us about ourselves? Hey, it shows us that no matter who you are, where you are, what your past is, what your life has been before this point, what your life is right now, Jesus offers forgiveness to you.

Now, I share these things, and sometimes I worry that like, hey, this is too simple. This is too basic. We know this stuff. But friends, this is the foundation of everything we do here.

That Jesus would offer forgiveness to you and to me. It shows us that we need forgiveness. It shows us that we were just like those who were standing there at the foot of the cross, rejecting him.

[14 : 47] It shows us that we, before we come to Jesus, the scripture says that we are enemies of God. Romans chapter number five, verse number 10 says this. It talks about forgiveness.

It talks about how Jesus gives us life. Romans 5, 10. We'll get to it here in a second. I'm thinking about this verse. It talks about how that we were his enemies.

He forgave us. There it is. Thank you. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more being reconciled, we shall save by his life.

If Jesus died for us when we were his enemies, how much more will he give us life, eternal life, by his resurrection? And so you've come into this place this morning, and it may be that you're not saved.

That you've never believed in Jesus. You've never received this forgiveness of sins. I want to let you know, friend, you are not too far from God to be forgiven. You're not too far from God to be forgiven.

[15 : 49] It doesn't matter where you've come from, where you've been. You could say, my past, you don't know my story. You don't know what I've done. You are absolutely right. I don't know.

I don't know. You don't know me. But I do know one thing about Jesus. That he offers forgiveness to all. He offers forgiveness to all. And Luke's purpose, we find out here, Luke's purpose was to show that Jesus is the forgiving Messiah, even as he dies.

I read this and I thought this was so good. Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who were killing him. He forgave one of the men sentenced to die with him. Here's the second thing I'd like you to take note of.

We're going to read on to the second statement that Jesus makes. First, we see that he offers forgiveness to all. And the second thing we see is that Jesus will forgive those who believe.

Look at this with me. Let's go on a little bit further into verse number 39. Now, before I read any further, this is something I found so interesting in studying this passage and studying the scene of the cross.

[17:05] Luke's gospel is the only gospel that records the conversation that we're about to read. The other gospel authors, they record the fact that these two thieves, right, you have Jesus in the middle and you have a thief on one side, a criminal on one side, a criminal on the other side.

And it says they cast the same railings, the same accusations, the same mocking in Jesus' teeth. That's what Matthew tells us in Matthew 27, 44.

In Mark 15, it says that the two criminals, they railed on him, which was true. That's what happened. But Luke shows us something that, yes, they both railed on him.

They both mocked him. They both said the exact same things. They both kind of called him out and said, Jesus, if you are who you say you are, then save us. Get us down off this cross. We don't want to die here today.

They both said that. But then one of them changed. One of them changed in this moment, in this afternoon, on the cross. And Luke is the one who records this account, this conversation.

[18:09] Would you read with me in verse number 40? But the other, answering, rebuked him. The one criminal, it's like he looks across. Imagine, he's on the cross here and he's been railing on Jesus.

He's been accusing Jesus and mocking Jesus and making fun of Jesus. He's just been awful, horrible. The other has been doing the same thing. They're all three dying. And then something switches in this man's heart.

And Luke says, but the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? Hey, we're both going to die, just like this man Jesus.

But there's something different about him. We're obviously and very clearly criminals. We deserve to die. But look at what it says in verse number 41.

And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done nothing amiss. He's looking and he's saying, hold up a second.

[19:10] Do you fear God? It's like he's kind of starting to come to this realization. We are dying because we are criminals. That makes sense. That happens all the time. That's what's supposed to happen.

But this guy, he's there on the cross. He's like, but this guy, this man, he's not done anything wrong. He's not stolen from anybody. He's not killed anybody. He's not done anything that anybody could figure out that is wrong.

There's no baggage, no history, no skeletons in the closet with this man. He's done nothing wrong. And look at what he says in verse 42. And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

What did he do in that moment? He recognized who Jesus was. And he believed who Jesus was. Everybody else is saying, if you're the king, if you're the king, if you're the king, then do this, do that.

Show how powerful you are. But he stops all of that and he says, you know what? You are the king. Remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[20 : 20] He believed. And then look at what Jesus says. This is the second statement that Luke records. Jesus speaking from the cross. Verse 43. And Jesus said to him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

What did Jesus do? He forgave that man. Redeemed that man. Saved that man. Not from physically dying in that moment. But from suffering, the consequences, the eternal punishment for his sins.

He saved that man in the moment. And what did that man do? All he did was believe. Believe. Believe. Friends, we must never forget. And you may have been taught differently.

That you have to do something to earn forgiveness from God. That you have to do something that God would let you into heaven. You have to pay some amount of money.

You have to pray a certain amount of times. You have to offer something. Or you have to be good enough. Or you have to be a member of a church. Or you have to do this or that or the other thing. The only thing that the scripture says a person has to do to be saved is believe.

[21 : 30] Think about it. This guy that's on the cross. Can he do anything else? He can't go get baptized. He can't give an offering. He can't share a track.

He can't join a church. He doesn't have time. He can't do a single thing other than say, you know what? Jesus, you are the king. And remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And he believes. And Jesus says, you know what? Today, today, you will be with me in paradise. How powerful is that?

Let me share with you a few thoughts about that statement that they just blow my mind. It's personal. That's a very personal statement. I mean, just imagine that. They're feet apart. And it's not like Jesus is just, you know, Jesus is just saying something.

No, in my imagination, I see Jesus looking at that man. I mean, Jesus is suffering excruciating pain. And he looks at that man and he says, you know what? You, you, today, you, you're going to be with me in paradise.

[22 : 32] It's personal. It's immediate. He said today, this day, Jesus knew that this man was going to die. Jesus was going to die. The other man was going to die.

One was going to enter into paradise with Jesus that very day. The other man was not. Or at least we don't know if he ever changed his mind and believed in Jesus.

It was immediate. It was relational. Can I share something that's so, that, that we could just, we could spend a lot of time thinking about. It was relational. Salvation is relational.

What does Jesus say? He says, you're going to be with me. You, the criminal, you're going to be with the king in my kingdom this very day. I, we don't even have time to keep going on that, but just think about that.

Jesus wants you to be with him. And he made it possible that you could be with him. He is the one who loved you. And he's not just giving you a get out of jail free card.

[23 : 33] He's giving you a place with him in all of eternity, experiencing the paradise of God. And finally, it was beautiful. He, why does he use the word paradise? Why doesn't he use the word heaven?

That's an interesting thing. And that's a whole other rabbit hole that we could go on down. But let me give you one thought about paradise. Paradise. That was the Persian word for a walled garden.

There's another place that the word paradise is used in the New Testament. It's only used a couple of times. And that's Revelation chapter number two, verse seven. Listen to this. This is Jesus. After all of these things, Jesus, he is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He's speaking. And John is hearing. The man who wrote Revelation is hearing. And listen to what he says. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

He's speaking about heaven. He's speaking about Eden restored. He's speaking about all that we read about in the book of Revelation with the new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem and the throne of God.

[24 : 39] This beautiful walled garden, the city of God. He says, today, you're going to be with me in that place. I don't know about you, but the more I think about that, the more it absolutely blows my mind.

That God's not just in Jesus. God does not just give us a get out of jail free card, but he gives us a place with him in paradise. That's salvation.

That's salvation. And so this thief, he did nothing but believe. And in believing, he received eternal life that very day. Finally, the third thing, if you want to write this down. If you want to write this down, we've seen where Jesus, he offers forgiveness to all, even his enemies.

Jesus, he forgives those who will believe, simply believing who he is, who Jesus is and what he's done. And finally, Jesus made possible complete, total, 100% paid for forgiveness for you.

Complete forgiveness. All of our sins done away with. All of our sins taken off of our account. How incredible is that? Would you continue reading in the account with me? There in verse number 44.

[25 : 44] And it's about the sixth hour. And there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. This is three hours in the middle of the day. When, I mean, heaven and earth, they, it's like all of creation is reacting to Jesus dying on the cross.

The sky goes dark in the middle of the afternoon. And he's there on the cross. And then listen to what he says. Verse 45. 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. What does that mean? And he says he was giving his spirit, entrusting his spirit, giving, handing his spirit back to God.

Now, that's kind of a strange thing, is it not? To say, all right, God, here's my spirit. I'm giving it back to you. But what it shows us about this man, Jesus, is that he was unlike any other man.

He was in complete control of the moment he died. You see, we could look at the cross and see it as a tragic story where a man is caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

[26 : 54] And he's falsely accused. And he goes to the cross. And he dies. And it's like, oh, that's horrible how badly they treated Jesus. But that's not what Luke is showing us. He's saying, no, Jesus was in control, knowing every step to that moment.

It was God the Father's plan that the son would come and die. And he says, you know what? It is finished. It's done. And into thy hands I commend my spirit. And he dies, finishing, completing the work of buying forgiveness for you and me.

So what does that mean for us? What does that mean for us? Luke is trying to point this out to us, saying, Jesus, he was in control. He released his spirit. He died on purpose so that you could be completely and totally forgiven.

You know, there are so many things that I think every single one of us, we could create a list of regrets. I wish I hadn't done this. I wish I hadn't done that. I messed up here.

I did wrong there. And you see, what Jesus did is he took that whole list of our sins, our failures, our wrongdoings, the evil that we've committed.

[28 : 04] He took it and he pardoned it. He wiped it away. Completely forgiven. Totally forgiven. Completely free. If you've believed in Jesus, you are free of every sin that you've ever committed.

How incredible is that? That's amazing. That's wonderful. I don't know about you, but it's like, that's, that, when I got saved, you see, I was 15 years old when I got saved.

And for so much of my life, I knew the story of the cross. I knew I'd looked at all of these things. I'd read every one of these words that we just read, but I had not believed until I was 15 years old.

I realized all I have to do is believe, trust, call upon him. And that was the moment when he, he took that weight, all of that sin, all of the evil that I had committed and he lifted it.

It was paid for. It was done away with. It was done away with. Completely and totally forgiven. Think about that for a moment. If you're saved, that's you.

[29 : 12] Completely, totally forgiven, pardoned, freed from the guilt and the weight of your sin. And if you're here this morning, and you right now, there's something going on in your heart and life where you just feel the weight and the burden of all the wrongs you've done.

Wrongs you've done to other people. Wrongs that you've committed against God. You just know, I am not a good person. You see, the Bible says that is the Holy Spirit convicting, putting his finger on the fact that we've sinned against God.

And that we need somebody to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And that's why the Holy Spirit is pointing out to you, Jesus, that he is the forgiving savior.

And so in this moment, you have a choice to make. Will you believe who you've heard this man, Jesus, to be? Or will you walk away and try to deal with your sin in some other manner?

You're going to try to adopt a new philosophy on life. You're going to try and do better. Friends, that's not going to work. There's only one that can forgive you and make you clean. Would you bow with me for a second?

[30 : 31] This is the time when we invite you to respond to God's word as it's been shared. You know, this morning we've looked at Luke, Luke's gospel, Luke's story of Jesus, of this man who died on the cross.

And we've seen that he highlights, he points out the fact that Jesus forgives sin. This morning, it might be that you've never called upon Jesus to save you from your sin.

You've never believed who he is. That he is the son of God who came and died in your place. It might be that you've heard this story before.

But I want to ask you, would you look? Would you see who Jesus is? Would you believe that he is who he said he is?

And he will do what he said he will do. That he will forgive anyone who believes and calls. It might be this morning, if that's you, that you pray something like this.

[31 : 35] Dear Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross for my sin. I believe that you rose again from the grave.

That you were who you said you were. And I believe in your word. Your word tells me that I can call on you. I can ask you to save me. And you will.

Thank you for forgiving my sin. And for making me your child. Maybe that you prayed that prayer.

And you meant it in your heart. Or you prayed something like it. The words aren't the issue here. But it's what you believe in your heart. That you would believe in Jesus this morning.

If you made that decision to believe in Jesus. I'd love to talk with you. Or to meet you at the next steps table in the back of the auditorium. And rejoice with you about how, what Jesus has just done in your life.

[32 : 35] I can give you a Bible if you don't have one. I can help you take your next step in following Jesus. Now, I want to turn to a second group. If you're here, you're a Christian. I know so many of you.

I know your testimony of salvation. How you've believed in Jesus. You know, friend, this morning, I think what this scripture does for us. Is it just makes us fall in love with Jesus all over again.

You know, there was a moment when Jesus was talking with one man who was self-righteous. And a woman who was obviously sinful. And the woman who was known to be a sinner.

She was just showing how much she loved Jesus. And Jesus pointed out, those who've been forgiven much, they love much.

Now, sometimes I think we get to a place where we don't think too much about how bad off we really are without Jesus. But I can speak from personal experience.

[33 : 35] Without Jesus, I have nothing. Neither do you. So this morning, it might be that you just want to confess and say, dear Jesus, I love you. Thank you for what you've done.

Thank you for being the forgiving savior. God, without you, I have nothing. Father, we come to you this morning. God, I'm just so grateful for the opportunity to share your word with those that are assembled here, those that are watching online.

And God, I pray that you would do your work in our hearts and lives. If there's someone here that's not saved, I pray that they would believe in you. For Christians, God, I pray that our love would never grow cold when we look upon Jesus, making it possible for us to be forgiven of our sins.

God, we love you. Thank you for your goodness.