

## Sermon - I Want to Be the Second Guy - The Thief on the Cross.

Preached 4/9/23 @ Cloverdale BC, Kilby CF

### Luke 23:32-47

**<sup>32</sup> And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. <sup>33</sup> 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.**

**<sup>34</sup> Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. <sup>35</sup> And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. <sup>36</sup> And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, <sup>37</sup> And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.**

**<sup>38</sup> And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This Is The King Of The Jews. <sup>39</sup> And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.**

**<sup>40</sup> But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?**

**<sup>41</sup> And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.**

**<sup>42</sup> And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.**

**<sup>43</sup> And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.**

Looking at Luke Chapter 23:38-43. I preached this sermon at a prison recently and the Lord showed me some things that I had never seen before with this story and I just want to cover some of the highlights with you today.

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Verse 39 one of the male factors which were hanged railed on him saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.”

Now what he's asking for is not bad; he's asking for a good thing. This malefactor or thief is asking for something that we all should be asking for. Hey Jesus, can you save us from this situation while you're also saving yourself? Good question, and one that we should be praying for in our current situation when we find ourselves in trouble or in need.

The problem is he is going about this the wrong way and asking amiss. First, he is asking Him is He really the Christ. Next, he is asking for salvation. A lot of people try to get out of trouble. They try to save themselves, but they go about it the wrong way. A lot of people are asking God to save them, but they are going about it the wrong way. You have to be careful and you have to be humble when you're approaching Christ.

He is not following the proper steps/sequence or plan of God. The first thief says, prove yourself to be the one first, and then save us. He lacks faith.

But look at the response. From the next thief.

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He goes through a three-step process.

1. Humility and recognizing there is a need for Christ. Clearly both of these thieves recognized they were in trouble and in need. They are under judgement and condemnation.
2. The second step is this thief takes responsibility for his actions. We are getting what we deserve. He actually repents or turns/changes his mind. This is another example of how and what to repent of.

This is huge because I have dealt with many people who clearly recognize they are in need but still refuse to take responsibility for their part for being in this hopeless situation. Until we accept we are in need of help AND in need of change, we will not get the breakthrough we desire.

I'm not saying that somebody might not have contributed. I'm not saying that you might not have gotten a bad hand. I'm not. I'm not saying that there might be some other contributing factors. But when you boil it all down. The finger needs to point back to you and you need to accept the responsibility for the role you played in your current situation.

It is the necessary part of the process and must be followed in order. If you don't first recognize your need for God, you will never make the first step toward salvation.

He turns or repents. We can see this in the difference between the two approaches. The first thief is following the same approach as the crowd. The passage says he "railed" on Christ. This means to speak evil of, speak reproachfully, defame or blaspheme.

- The crowd was doing the same things to Christ. He is following the crowd or the world in his approach....because he does not believe.
  - It is almost as if he is trying to bargain with Christ, I'll start believing when you start to do something for me to get me out of my situation.
3. Looking to Christ for new life and new hope is the third step in this process. By faith, he believes that Jesus is the Christ before he asks for and receives salvation.

**<sup>42</sup> And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.**

**<sup>43</sup> And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.**

But now in verse 42, I see an example of some of the greatest faith. Look at what he says here. He looks at Christ, sees that Christ is the innocent lamb. That is one of the most profound examples of faith that I've seen.

- He calls him Lord! He doesn't ask if he is the Christ, he already believes that He is.
- By faith, he puts his hope in the resurrection of Christ. This is what all of us must do to be saved.

He looks at Jesus. He sees that Jesus is in the same situation that he is in. I just said something. Jesus is in the same situation. In fact, Jesus is with this man, going through the same thing that he's going through.

- He looks at Jesus and says I don't care what it looks like now, I believe that you are not going to let this situation keep you down.
- It looks like defeat. It looks like failure. It looks like you're not gonna make it. But he looks at Jesus and says, I don't think you're going out like this. I think you're gonna recover from this. I think you're going to make it.
- He looks to Jesus and says, when you make it, when you survive this, when you recover from this, when you get up out of the grave, can you remember me when you get the paradise, when you get to heaven, when you get to your better season? Can you Remember Me? Because I believe?
- You're not gonna stay down. Let me show you how great faith that is. He sees a future in Christ and he doesn't let anybody else around him cause him to not see and experience and trust in the hope and truth that is in Christ. Watch me. Everybody else around this situation, people looking at Jesus, people seeing him on the cross, shaking their heads, making fun of him, thinking that he's defeated, thinking he can't make it out of this. He's not gonna survive this. There's no hope out of this. There's no recovery at it. There's no getting up after this. All they see is the end. But this man, through his faith, sees a future and better days.
- He has the audacity to believe that he has hope through through Christ, if that's not great faith. And it's the same faith that we need to have today.
- While he is looking at Jesus, he is also looking at how Jesus is dealing with this situation. The faith in which he handles this problem causes the second thief to believe.

And this is the message back then and this is the message here today. Christ is with us, just like he's with this man and our tough situations. But when we're down and hanging out with Jesus. Others may say we're not gonna recover from this. We won't survive this. Our dreams are gone. There's no getting up from this situation; there is no hope after this mistake. But Jesus looks at us and says. There's a miracle behind your mistake.



Jesus looks at us and looks at our faith and says you can recover with me. In fact, you will be with me. And that's not just the application for being with him in heaven when we die. But we can be with him and be encouraged right now as we go through our right now situation. We can recover from our mistakes even today in the land of the living. That's the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at what happens next. Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Still on the cross, still looking back, still looking hopeless. But Jesus gives him a word and says don't worry about it. Where I'm going, where you think I'm going, where you believe I'm going. You can have that same belief for yourself. I just said so. You can have the same hope and the same power of the resurrection in your life, and you don't have to wait to die to receive it. Because if anybody is hearing the words that I'm saying and out of this scripture, you ought to be able to have hope and joy and go through your tough time. Knowing that, the season that you're in right now, the problem that you're in right now, the situation that you're dealing with right now, the impossible circumstances that you're dealing with right now, the death of something that you're dealing with right now.....cannot keep you down; and your best season, your Paradise season, is about to occur. That's the gospel.

Now let me give you a caution. The devil is going to be mad when you start hanging around Jesus. There are still people hanging around Jesus who don't get it and lack faith. You got the resurrection hope of the second thief, but you also have the other guy who is coming at Jesus incorrectly, who is not coming at him by faith. The man who is saved says, I know you're Jesus and I know you're Christ, and I know you're Lord. No question. No doubt about it. The man who is saved does not let others hanging around, cause him to lose his hope of a better future.

Application for today. Be careful who you're hanging around, cause they're still haters that are hanging around Jesus and they may keep you from your best season in paradise. You have to rebuke and disassociate yourself and not be discouraged at what other people are saying about Jesus.

Jesus should be in the middle of every decision.

There is no sin that your faith in Christ can't overcome. Your mess and your mistake don't disqualify you for a miracle. He will bring you out.

It's a summary. Recognize that you need help. And recognize that hope can come from Christ. Change your mind about trying to do things your own way. Change your mind about following the crowd. And shift your focus from yourself, to faith in Christ. And then put your hope in Christ in believing that if he did it for the thief on the cross, he'll do it for you today....If you only believe.

The same promise the second thief received is the same promise He gives us today. I'm standing on the promises. He's with us, as we go through, and He will bring us out.

We don't have to die today to be with Him. But we do have to die to self, to be with Him. We can be with Him right now, today. Because just like he was with that thief on the cross. He can be with you today.

Last key application points:



- Every day our cross is still up there.
- Every day we face a decision on whether we will believe him for our situation or not.
- I have often been the first guy; made decisions not based on Christ or faith.
  - Sought after a good thing the wrong way.
  - Not handled my problems in faith.
  - We have all experienced the first guy before.
- I don't want to be the first guy anymore; I'm the second guy, enjoying the promise of the resurrection.
  - I'm crucified with Christ.
- God choose Jesus; the people even said he claims to be the chosen one of God.

Who will you choose?