

## Three Crosses

Luke 23:32-43

PW Emerson – 04/28/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

Last Sunday we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus – often referred to as Easter. But it is such a momentous event that on the church calendar, Easter is a six-week season, from resurrection Sunday until Pentecost.

So today we're going to look at another perspective of Easter.

Luke 23:32-43

<sup>32</sup>Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. <sup>33</sup>When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. <sup>34</sup>Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

<sup>35</sup>The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

<sup>36</sup>The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar <sup>37</sup>and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

<sup>38</sup>There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>39</sup>One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

<sup>40</sup>But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? <sup>41</sup>We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

<sup>42</sup>Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

<sup>43</sup>Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Three crosses, for 3 people, all responding differently to sin.

Let's take a look at them.

## ONE CRIMINAL

### Verse 39

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

The criminal on this cross joined in the mob.

The mob was yelling at Jesus, hurling insults, jeering at him.

Although he called out to Christ, mostly mocking him, the only deliverance he asked for was physical deliverance, not spiritual deliverance.

He was concerned only for the moment; he didn't seem to think about eternity ... something a man about to die would shortly be facing .

That rings true for a lot of people today.

We seem to call out to God mostly for help with our physical needs

- Help with car
- Help with money
- Help with relationship

And it is less common we pray to God for our soul

We need to talk to God more often about eternity, about our soul.

John 8:24

I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.

The sinner on the first cross died in his sins.

MIDDLE CROSS

This man didn't die in sin.

He died for sin.

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

He gave up his life for the brokenness of all people – us included.

I Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

Jesus was undeserving of his crucifixion.

Yet he endured it to save others.

Christ alone is selfless and he demonstrated that on the cross.

#### OTHER CRIMINAL – THIRD CROSS

He died to sin.

He did not live a life deserving of mercy.

Yet he looked to the one dying for sin.

He asked for mercy – and he got it.

THIS criminal had theology worth looking at.

#### THIS CRIMINAL FEARED GOD

Verse 40 – he calls out to the other criminal

Don't you fear God?

Fear isn't the best translation.

A better English word to use for what he is saying is AWE.

Aren't you in AWE of God?

- The almighty
- The one who is all-powerful
- The creator of the universe
- The one who delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt?
- The one who gave the promised land to the Hebrews?

- The God the Jews at that time worshipped

One criminal is really saying to the other – Aren't You in AWE of God?

We need to ask that same question of us today.

Are you in awe of God?

When your world seems to crumble around you, do you think and say, Woe is Me! Or do you call out to an awesome God and NOT worry?

We worry about

- Gas mileage
- Will the weather cooperate with our plans
- What's my job going to look like in a year
- Am I getting enough exercise – NO
- How's my diet

When we really should be worshipping God and being in awe of God FIRST!

People ask me,

- Did you guys really change oil for 50 cars?
- Did you guys really make up over 200 Thanksgiving Baskets? AND have money left over?
- HOW DID YOU DO IT?!?!?

I didn't!

We didn't!

The God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob is an awesome God and those things are trivial for him!

With the faith of a mustard seed, you will see an awesome God do amazing things!

## CRIMINAL RECOGNIZED JESUS WAS INNOCENT

Verse 41 – he said to the other criminal

We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Jesus had done nothing wrong!!

II Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This criminal dying on the cross had certainly heard about Jesus

Word had gotten out about Jesus.

But everyone else had abandoned him.

This CRIMINAL recognized Jesus for who he was.

Thus he easily said that Jesus was innocent!

Then he goes on to call out to Jesus for salvation!

Remember, the name Jesus means salvation.

Verse 42

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

He knew

- Who he was
- What he had done
- Who Jesus was

So he calls out to Jesus, for mercy, undeserved mercy.

It reminds me of Luke 18:

<sup>9</sup>To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup>"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

<sup>13</sup>"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

<sup>14</sup>"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

What happens to the criminal on the cross?

Verse 43

<sup>43</sup>Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

For a dying criminal, hanging on a cross, to hear that ... that's amazing!

THAT'S

- Mercy
- Grace

Romans 10:13

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

THAT INCLUDES US!!

I love this piece because it is a wonderful picture of us today!

Some people in the world today are the first criminal ...

- Indignant
- Self-important
- Self-reliant
- Answering to no one
- Ignoring God
- Some even taunting God

They are more concerned with the here and now and don't give a second thought to the hereafter.

Some people in the world today are the second criminal ...

- Realizing their faults
- Recognizing God for who he is
- Holding God in awe
- Believing Jesus is the way for eternal life

Expressing Acts 16:31

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved

Or as Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.

Both criminals were undeserving sinners.

One ended up in heaven.

Which one will you be?