

LENT SERIES

7 Sayings of Jesus (2 or 7)

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Luke 23:39-43

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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Pray.

Introduction:

We come this morning to the second of the 7 sayings of Jesus from the cross.

This passage is one of the most famous and most beloved passages in the Bible;
About the criminal on the cross.

Turn in your Bible to **Luke 23:39-43**

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” 42 And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” 43 And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

We know very little about these 2 men who were crucified alongside of Jesus.

We don't know their names.

We know they have done something wrong.

We don't know what they did to deserve the cross.

According to the other gospels, they were '**robbers**' or '**thieves**'. Not petty thieves but likely rebels against Rome.

We know they knew each other.

We know one or both at some point insulted Jesus.

We know they had some knowledge of Jesus or had heard of him.

The first one calls him the **Christ**.

The second one calls him by his first name, **Jeshua**.

Maybe they had only learned about him that day.

We know that they were beside him, with Jesus in the middle.

We know they are close enough to talk to each other.

We know they had their legs broken so that they would die faster.

We know that one of them passed into eternity *insulting* Christ. The other passed into eternity *with* Christ.

THE UNREPENTANT THIEF ON THE CROSS.

He insults Jesus.

“Are you not the Christ?” vs “Are you the Christ?”

He ‘Blasphemes’ Jesus- it says in Greek. Insults him!

Must have been something in his tone. [demonstrate]

In the most dire situation of his life, he is hanging on a cross next to God the Son.

He got caught in his sin.

But instead of being broken and repenting, he insults.

He’s paying for his crimes with his life.

There couldn’t be a more sad situation.

He is forever written down in the pages of history.

Millions and millions have read his story of unbelief and mockery.

THE REPENTANT THIEF ON THE CROSS.

What did he say to Jesus that showed *saving* faith?

There had to be something in what he said- that showed Jesus that he believed in him— for Jesus said to him, **“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”**

What does the criminal say?

1. He confesses his sin.

v41 “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds.”

Meaning, “We are/ I am guilty. I deserve this cross.” He knows exactly what he has done. He isn’t fighting. He is confessing.

2. He confesses that Jesus is righteous.

v41 “But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Somehow he recognizes that Jesus is not guilty, but is innocent. Like the Centurion in v.47

3. He confesses that Jesus is a King.

v42 “When you come into YOUR kingdom.”

This to me is the phrase that shows that he believes. He believes Jesus is a KING.

I’ve asked myself why in that moment he used that word to refer to Jesus.

I wonder what did he know about Jesus and the kingdom!?

Had he heard Jesus teach?

We’ll never know.

The word 'KING' is mentioned directly two other times in this passage, although the term 'Christ' is close to the word 'King'.

- v.37 "if you are the King of the Jews, save yourself", said the soldiers.
- v.38 "There was an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

The only explanation for this man's salvation is the mercy and grace of God.

He believes Jesus is the King and has a kingdom.

{Lastly}, 4. He cries out to Jesus for help.

v42 "Remember me."

The criminal prays a simple prayer. "Remember me."

Two words. A simple cry to Jesus.

Though the request was simple, the answer was not.

In that moment, a great exchange took place.

Where the first criminal was paying for his own sins....
the second criminal was NOT.

In that moment, Jesus was paying for his sins.
That's why Jesus was able to say to him what he said.

The man asked simply to be 'remembered'.

He got a lot more than what he asked.

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

On that dark Friday afternoon after 3:00pm, he would first see Jesus cry out with a loud voice and die.

Then the soldiers would come and **crush his legs with an iron bar**, so that he couldn't push up any longer to catch his breath.

And before the sun went down, this man would breath his last breath.

His body would either be left for the animals to eat, thrown into the garbage dump outside of town or taken by his family.

BUT HIS SOUL WOULD BE WITH JESUS in PARADISE!

Now, in our remaining time I would like to ask some questions of this text. In these questions, I think we will find some encouragement here.

I. Was it fair to let this man into Paradise?

Just like that..on his deathbed...he is able to just 'be saved'? He has lived a life of sin!

He never got baptized.
He never took the Lord's Supper.
Never attended VBS.
Never served in a church.
Never read the Bible.
What kind of God would just let a criminal in at the last minute?

The God of the Bible!

Ephesians 2:8-9 says,
8 For by grace you have been saved through faith.
And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Titus 3:4-5 says,
4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of
God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not
because of works done by us in righteousness, but
according to his own mercy,

Illustration: [paraphrased from Matthew 20]
There was a factory owner who went out at 6:00am
in the morning to hire laborers for his factory. After
agreeing with the laborers for \$100 a day, he sent
them inside the factory to work.
And he went out again at 9:00am and saw some guy
standing around at the market. He said to them,
“You go into the factory too and whatever price is
right, I'll give you.” So the guy went to work. He
went out again at noon and 3:00 and did the same.
At about 5:00pm, he went out and found some other

guys standing there. He said, “Why have you been standing here all day?” They said, “No one has hired us.” He said, “Go work in my factory.” When evening came he said to the manager, “Call everyone and have them come in for payment, starting with the last ones.” The guys hired at about 5:00pm got \$100 and everyone else. Now when the guys hired early in the morning came, they thought they would get more money. They got \$100. They were upset. They said, “We worked all day in the blazing sun and you paid those guys the same as us?” The owner said, “I haven’t done you any wrong. Didn’t you agree to work for \$100? Take your money and go. Can’t I do what I want with what belongs to me? Are you mad at me for being kind?”

We are saved not by our works but by God’s grace and mercy.

So, God is fair to save whoever he pleases at whatever time he pleases.

***Which means it’s not too late for you yet!**

***Which means it’s not too late for anyone yet.**

No one is too far gone. Let that encourage you today.

Because we are saved by grace and not by works, a person can be saved at the last hour, on their death bed...just like this criminal.

II. What does this statement teach us about life after death?

Any Christian who read Luke's gospel in the 1st century would have been under the threat of persecution or even death.

Many died under the Romans.

This story would have given encouragement to any that death, even a horrible death, would send them to be with Jesus in Paradise.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 says,

6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Philippians 1:23 says,

23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

John 11:25-26 says,

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

The Christian who dies immediately goes to be with Jesus.

Jesus said, **TODAY** you will be with me in Paradise.

***That's good news today, if you are a Christian.**

***That's not good news if you aren't.**

19 “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20 And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, 21 who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table.

Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted

up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. 24 And he called out, ‘Father Abraham,

have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Child,

remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in

anguish. 26 And besides all this, between us and

you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’

The Bible is clear on life after death. Those who believe in Christ go to heaven forever. Those who don't believe go to hell forever.

III. Where is Paradise? Is it heaven?

This word Paradise is a borrowed word from Persian, the language of Iran.

It means 'Garden' or 'pleasure ground'.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it is the word used for the Garden of Eden.

It appears in the New Testament in 3 places.

- here in Luke

-2 Corinthians 12:3- Paul caught up into paradise in a vision

-Revelation 2:7- "To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."

Here is what we know!

There is a lot that we don't know.

In every instance the word Paradise is used, it is about heaven.

But this we know...

It is a place the Lord is.

It is where believers go when they die. It is a nice place!

Let me close by summarizing and giving us some very simple application.

1. **Anyone, anyone can be saved no matter how bad they are and no matter how late they repent & believe.**

This is true only because we are saved by God's mercy and grace, not by the good life we live or the good things we do.

- * Perhaps you think you're too bad for Jesus!
- * Perhaps you think someone is too far gone!
- * Let this story today bring you hope.
- * **WE ARE ALL GREAT SINNERS AND CHRIST IS A GREAT SAVIOR.**

2. **CAUTION: A person should not *presume* that they can live anyway they like and just believe right before they die.**

"Hey, I'll just go the criminals route. The best of both worlds. Enjoy sin and pleasure now and then ring the bell just before I die."

You cannot be born again any time you wish anymore than a dead person floating in the ocean can make a lifeguard dive in, drag them to shore and breath into their lungs.

Your repentance & new birth depend on God.

The time to repent and believe is when he draws you. There may not be another chance.

3. What a hope we have in Jesus! To die is to be with him forever.

Closing Illustration:

We had a young Muslim man live with us for a year in 2005. We loved him like a son. The oldest man in our church passed away. He was in his 80's. He had served the Lord faithfully for many years. I took our Muslim son from Uzbekistan to the funeral. We sang songs. We ate. We celebrated his life with his family. It was a happy time. A happy day. He sat beside me the whole time with his mouth open. Stunned! In his country people cry for 40 days when someone dies. It's sad. He said to me, "I just don't understand why everyone is so happy. It doesn't make sense."

That's the gospel.

Whoever turns from their sin and believes....whether you're an old man who's lived for Jesus your whole life or you are a criminal on a cross.....Jesus says....

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”