

## SMALL TALK

1. Which childhood chores were your least favorite? And your favorite?

## VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Luke 23:26-55.** Luke says very little about Jesus' physical death. What he focuses on instead are the attitudes of others toward him. What do the attitudes toward Jesus reveal about each group or individual?
3. Why does Luke highlight what the criminals said, and the dialogue Jesus had with one of them?
4. Which sayings of Jesus from the cross does Luke record? What do we learn from each?
5. What odd phenomena occurred at the point of Jesus' last breath (23:44-45)? What do you make of that? See also Hebrews 10:19-25

## GETTING PERSONAL

6. The Gospels describe the cross more than explain the meaning of the cross. In what circumstances did you first understand the meaning of the cross?

## PRACTICE!

**Devote Daily:** Deepen your understanding of the meaning of the cross.

- (1) the substitutionary nature of his sacrificial death (Isaiah 52:13–53:12)
- (2) God's righteousness, not ours (Romans 3:21–26)
- (3) destruction of Satan's kingdom (Colossians 2:15; 1 John 3:8)
- (4) new relationship with God (Romans 5:8–11; 2 Corinthians 5:15–19)

(5) the power of sin is broken, and victory is assured (Romans 6:5–11;  
Galatians 3:13–14; Hebrews 2:14–15; 1 John 1:7–9)

(6) secures eternity with God (Romans 5:6–11; 8:31–39)

March 28, 2021

## ***The Certainty: At the Edge of Eternity***

Many people see the cross as tragedy; many others see the message of the cross as foolishness; only a few see the cross as victory.

The Gospels describe the events more than explain them. Acts and the letters of the Apostles (the rest of the New Testament) explain the events.

Today we see even in the description of the crucifixion the victory up close and personal. We see this well in two statements of Jesus on the cross that only Luke records. These were recorded as Luke has already told us “that we might know the certainty” ( Luke 1:4). The certainty of what? The certainty of the victory of the cross for each of us.

***Luke 23:34 (CSB) ... “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.”***

***Luke 23:43 (CSB) ... “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”***

Now listen for these words again in context.

*Luke 23:32–43 (CSB) Two others—criminals—were also led away to be executed with him. <sup>33</sup> When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided his clothes and cast lots. <sup>35</sup> The people stood watching, and even the leaders were scoffing: “He saved others; let him save himself if this is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One!” <sup>36</sup> The soldiers also mocked him. They came offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup> and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!” <sup>38</sup> An inscription was above him: This Is the King of the Jews. <sup>39</sup> Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” <sup>40</sup>*

*But the other answered, rebuking him: “Don’t you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment?”<sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, because we’re getting back what we deserve for the things we did, 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> And he said to him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

## I. **FORGIVENESS comes from the cross**

We already know from Luke 5 that Jesus claimed authority to forgive sins.

A crowded room was leaning in and listening to Jesus when he was interrupted by 4 men who dug a hole through the roof and lowered down a paralyzed man. Jesus looked at the man and said, “*Friend, your sins are forgiven*”. The room was suddenly buzzing with controversy. *Who does he think he is offering forgiveness? He doesn’t know this man! Only God can forgive sins.*

Then Jesus says, “Which is easier: to say, “Your sins are forgiven”, or to say ‘Get up and walk.’? Talk is cheap. It is easy to SAY your sins are forgiven, but who would know if they really are forgiven or not? You cannot see if such a statement worked or not.

*“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” — he told the paralyzed man, “I tell you: Get up, take your stretcher, and go home.””* Luke 5:24 CSB

And the man walked out.

Which is easier? Forgiveness or healing?

*ILLUSTRATE: “Friend, your sins are forgiven”*

**Offended party:** *You can’t forgive him. Only I can!*

Jesus has two kinds of authority to forgive. The authority as King and judge, and the authority as the offended party.

**What held Jesus to the cross?** It was not the nails. Three times in this short description was the mockery: *You Saved Others Save Yourself.* **Why didn't he?**

Nails don't hold him there! His LOVE for us held him there. **He is not held on the cross as the victim; He is the victor.**

## II. **ETERNAL LIFE comes from the cross**

*Luke 23:34 (CSB) ... "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing."*

*Luke 23:43 (CSB) ... "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

By his death he offers us forgiveness, taking away our old life of death. By his life he offers us NEW LIFE. He replaces the old life of sin with the life of the Spirit.

## III. **YOUR STORY comes from the cross**

The center cross is still the divider between mocking rejectors and repenting receivers. Where are you in relationship to the cross?

### **The Hardened Criminal**

Tragically, the hardened criminal expressed no thought of God, no guilt, no repentance, no concern for forgiveness.

And ominously, he hears no word from Jesus. No argument. No warning. Only silence. Perhaps this causes the man to rage all the more.

The hardened criminal is at the point of no return and about to step over the edge into eternity. He clings to his chosen lifestyle, in an arrogant self justified defiance. He defies the government. He wants no forgiveness. He has chosen his path, and he will not bow or bend. He defies ....everyone!

### **The Repentant Criminal**

In the middle of all the madness, a solo voice rang out. “Don’t you fear God?” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” (23:40-41)

This is repentance. Where did that come from? This is some kind of awakening. What caused it?

He had witnessed meekness, and he did not see this meekness as weakness. There was something so very bright and good and strong in this meekness. How can he bear such pain with such kindness!? How can he be praying for his executioners!? How can he address God so intimately as his FATHER!?

He had never before seen anything like this. It stopped him cold. He looked with eyes now open. He listened and observed with a newfound awareness that was profound. What was it with this man?

He had heard the mockery. He was being crucified because of his claim to be the Messiah? Something is very wrong here.

It made his sin feel all the more sinful. It made his feeble efforts all the more misguided. This was someone he wished to know more about. But what could he say?

Such a clear awareness of his own sin put him at a profound advantage over so many others in our world.

He said, We are getting what we deserve! Not this man.

While hanging on the edge of eternity he became profoundly humble, with a humility he had never known before. But rather than despair, he had hope. *If this man can forgive his executioners, maybe he can he forgive me. Could he actually be the Messiah?* As soon as he asks the question something inside embraces the answer and words spill out of his heart.

*Luke 23:42-43 (CSB) Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”<sup>43</sup> And he said to him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

### **3 CROSSES ILLUSTRATION**

ADAPTED FROM: Hughes, R. K. (1998). Luke: that you may know the truth (p. 387). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

The captain of the largest ship afloat in the early 1900s went out of his way one Saturday to see the famous preacher and pioneer of radio broadcasting, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse. Dr. Barnhouse quickly discerned what this man needed, and he drew 3 crosses on a chalkboard. Underneath the first cross he wrote the word “in”. Underneath the third cross he wrote the word “in”. Underneath the center cross he wrote the words, “Not in”.

He explained, Jesus is the only one who did not need to pray “Father, forgive me.” Instead he prays, “Father, forgive them!”

There was sin in the hardened criminal. There was sin in the softened criminal. There was no sin in Jesus.

Then over the first cross and the third cross he wrote the word “on”. Then he asked the man, “Have you ever run a red light?” The man said “yes”. And Dr. Barnhouse asked, “Were you caught?” And the man said, “no”. Then Barnhouse explained. Then that is a description of sin in you, but you didn’t have sin “on” you. You did not have to pay the penalty. The sin was not “on” you.

These two were caught, and all their sins caught up to them and were now on them.

But then Barnhouse wrote the word “on” over the center cross, and erased the word “on” above the third cross.

“The one criminal placed his faith in Jesus, and that made all the difference.

Which man are you?” He asked.

The man broke into tears. I am the man who believes in Jesus!