

Week of April 1-7

TODAY!

Scripture Reading: Read Luke chapter 23

As has been pointed out repeatedly in our NT Challenge, each gospel writer has a particular portrait of Jesus that he paints for us. For Matthew, it was Jesus the King. For Mark, it was Jesus the Servant of God. For Luke, it's Jesus the Savior. Again and again, Luke comes back to this theme throughout his gospel of Jesus saving people. In today's chapter reading, we see him do it one more time.

As I write this devotional, Good Friday (the day on which Jesus was crucified on Calvary's cross) is about a week away. The gospel writers record seven sayings Jesus uttered while on the cross. Three of these sayings are recorded in Luke's gospel in chapter 23. The one who came to seek and save that which was lost does so again in the midst of his agony. Can you see it?

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. In Luke's first recorded saying of Jesus, we see the Lord extending forgiveness to his captors who had beaten him, spit on him, mocked him, flogged him, crucified him and gambled for his clothes. What a demonstration of grace! He could have called down legions of angels and wiped these wicked men out. Instead, he offers forgiveness to all who would hear and receive. Perhaps it was this very declaration of forgiveness that changed the heart of one of the criminals on the cross.

Changed the heart? What do you mean? Well, in Matthew's gospel, we're told that the two robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. Something changed one of the robbers' hearts, though, while they all hung on their crosses. He went from insulting Jesus to calling on His name. When the unrepentant robber continued to insult Jesus, the repentant robber rebuked him, challenged him to fear God, acknowledged that he was guilty of his crimes, declared that Jesus was innocent and requested that Jesus remember him when He came into his kingdom.

I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise. Based on this sinner's acknowledgment of his sin and his confession of faith in Jesus, the Savior extends grace once again. What faith on the part of the sinner as he looked at a bloody, beaten, and crucified man and saw a Savior! What mercy extended by Jesus to one who did nothing to deserve it! He was headed for an eternity apart from Christ but in his last moments of life on earth, he found salvation from a merciful Savior.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. His mission accomplished, Jesus commits his spirit to his Father and breathes his last.

What a beautiful portrait of Jesus the Savior Luke paints for us in this chapter! Three sayings. Grace offered. Grace received. Mission accomplished. What a "Today" that sinner had. Paul tells us that "Today" is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Have you received Him yet as Savior! Today could be your day!

Action Step & Prayer Focus: If you haven't yet received Christ as Savior, follow the example of the thief on the cross TODAY! Acknowledge your sin and trust his grace.

Take-away: *As long as its TODAY, you have a chance to say YES to the Savior!*