

WITH ME IN PARADISE

Luke 23:32-43

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- How would you define salvation in the simplest way possible?
- What does it mean for someone to remember you? How does it feel when someone does?

Luke records an exchange between Jesus Christ and one of the criminals who was crucified alongside him. The exchange is simple, and yet, life-changing. The repentant criminal recognizes Jesus' authority and implores him "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Together, let's study Christ's response to the criminal "Today, you will be with me in paradise" and receive the comfort and hope of Christ's words as they humbly remind us that even at our worst, salvation is not impossible for God.

Listen: [*With Me in Paradise*](#)

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- In segment 1, hosts Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee review the details we know about the scene of Jesus' crucifixion. Was there anything new that you didn't know before or maybe something you did know, but hadn't previously given much thought? What thoughts or feelings stirred in you as they discussed the details of the scene: the two guilty men that hung beside him, the mocking crowd, the humiliation, etc?
- In segment 2, Scott ponders the penitent thief's word choice, noting that he asks Jesus to "remember me" not "save me." Consider this explanation Fleming Rutledge offers, "In the Old Testament, when God 'remembers,' it has a distinct meaning. It does not mean 'to think about' or 'to recall to mind.' That would not mean very much. When God 'remembers,' he does not just think *about us*. He acts *for us*, with power to save" (*The Seven Last Words from the Cross*, p. 20). Identify some Old Testament stories that support this explanation. How does this Old Testament understanding add meaning to Jesus Christ's promise to the thief that, "Today, you will be with me in paradise"?
- As Rutledge reflects on Christ's crucifixion and the two criminals crucified with him, she contends that Luke invites his readers to see themselves in both of the thieves and astutely observes "there are aspects of us in both of them..." (*The Seven Last Words from the Cross*, p. 19). In what ways can you identify yourself in the thief who mocks Jesus and also in the thief who repents and asks Jesus to "remember me"?
- In what ways does Christ's promise from the cross that "Today, you will be with me in paradise" give you hope?

Related Passages

- **Romans 5:6-11**
- **John 14:5-6**
- **John 3:16-17**

Conclusion

For many of us, simply saying “Lord, remember me” seems too simple or too easy. Yet Scott reminded us that this exchange between Jesus Christ and the thief on the cross “...is a profound act of faith, but it is also a profound reminder that you never know where the Holy Spirit is going to put grace. Never write anybody off. God does change hearts; he does it all the time.”

Spend some time considering your answers to these questions: have you asked the Lord to remember and save you or are you still relying on yourself? Who might you be writing off as beyond saving? Who do you know that needs a profound change of heart?

Close your time of reflection in prayer for yourself and for the people the Holy Spirit brought to mind. Pray for God to work in them and you like he did in the penitent thief.

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