



The Week of March 28, 2021
A Tale of Two Thieves
Conversation Guide

This Week's Take-Aways

- **About Salvation-** (Ephesians 2:1-10) Salvation is an act of God's grace, not of our works. God offers redemption of anyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior. They become new persons in Christ, have their sins forgiven by God, are set apart to live for God's purposes and anticipate eternity in heaven with God.
- **I Worship-** (Psalm 95:1-7) Because of who He is and what he has done, I worship God individually each day and corporately with my church family as often as they assemble.
- **I Am Confident-** (1 Peter 1:3-5) Because my hope for the future is placed on the steadfastness of God and the trustworthiness of his promises, I live with confidence.

Intro Questions

- "Alive today by the grace of God." Do you have any stories from your youth that fall in that category?
- Have you ever received grace (getting better than you deserve) from someone in authority?
- Have you ever given grace to someone that deserved far worse?

The Criminals

- Read Luke 23:32-43

Two others – criminals – were also led away to be executed with him. 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. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided his clothes and cast lots.

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!” The soldiers also mocked him. They came offering him sour wine and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!” An inscription was above him: This Is the King of the Jews.

Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other answered, rebuking him: “Don’t you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment? We are punished justly, because we’re getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

- What do we know about this thief?

- Read Mark 10:46-52

They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many warned him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!” Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; he’s calling for you.” He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus. Then Jesus answered him, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Rabboni,” the blind man said to him, “I want to see.” Jesus said to him, “Go, your faith has saved you.” Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.

- Why did Pastor David refer to Bartimaeus when talking about the story of the thief on the cross?
- What do these stories tell us about the heart of Christ?

- Read Psalm 68:5-6

God in his holy dwelling is a father of the fatherless and a champion of widows. God provides homes for those who are deserted. He leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in a scorched land.

- Why were prisoners included? Do you think this only applied to people that were wrongly imprisoned?

- Read Luke 19:10

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

- Who are the lost?
- Are the lost easily spotted? Can someone that appears to have it all together still be lost?
- What is our role as believers in this?
- 30% of Americans think they will go to heaven because they are a good person. Do you know anyone that thinks this way?
- "None of us deserve a shot at heaven based on our own merit. Take a moment right now and compare yourself to the splendor of a perfect God. How do you measure up? Do you come up short? Welcome to the human race!"

- Read Luke 23:41

"We are punished justly, because we're getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong."

- These words were spoken by one of the thieves crucified with Jesus. Did he understand what he really deserved?

Next Steps

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:21

He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- How did the thief on the cross go from condemned to forgiven?
- Did he have a chance to get his life straightened out? Become a theological expert? Make amends for his wrongs...?
- What does it mean to become a believer in Jesus Christ?
- Share the story of when you became a believer or started seeking answers about Jesus.

- Read Ephesians 2:8-9

For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift – not from works, so that no one can boast.

- What part does Jesus play in your salvation?
- What part do you play?

- Read Luke 23:42-43

Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other answered, rebuking him: "Don't you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment? We are punished justly, because we're getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

- How did the other thief respond?
 - What happened to him?
 - The tale of the two thieves describe the two responses to Jesus that we all can have. We all fall into either one or the other camp- there is no gray area. Discuss.
- Compare your resume with God's like the thief did. Sit down with a piece of paper, draw a line down the middle and on the left side of the line, write out your resume. List your accomplishments and your qualities. Then on the right side, write out God's resume. The best way to get started there is to read Psalms 145 & 146. These are Psalms of praise that recount just some of God's acts. Find them on the church app or at icelebration.org/psalms.