

**Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions:  
A Cross Road - Luke 23:32-49**

**Think about stories you have heard in the news recently, or things that have happened in your own life. What is one story that has seemed unfair to you recently, and why?**

**What things do we base our understanding of fairness on?**

**Why is fairness something we value?**

Sometimes we look at the suffering in the world around us and wonder where the justice is. From a very early age, we learn that life is not fair. However, we also believe in a God of justice, so we want Him to deal with the unjust circumstances we see around us. Today we are going to look at a man who encountered Jesus in the hour of his own execution, as he received the justice society said he deserved for his crimes. Even in that moment, this criminal understood something no one else did—Jesus had done nothing wrong but was paying the penalty for man’s sin (including the criminal) before God by dying on the cross. This story contradicts our human understanding of fairness and reminds us that Jesus has joined us in our condemnation in order to offer us salvation, something none of us deserve.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 15:22-26.

**How do you explain why these people would mock Jesus by casting lots for his clothes after nailing him to the cross?**

**Through what lens did these soldiers view Jesus?**

**How much do you think the mob mentality impacted the events that took place here?**

It seems strange that these soldiers would treat Jesus, who had never done anything wrong, so callously. As if nailing Him to a cross wasn’t enough, they piled on by mocking him as they cast lots for His clothes and put a sign over His head. The lens through which these people saw Jesus was shared hatred. It is likely none of them had any personal animosity toward Jesus, however, they were reacting to Him as the mob had. However, we are each individually responsible for our response to Jesus. Regardless of what others think or do, we must each choose the lens by which we will relate to Him.

**Has there ever been a time in your life when you would say your own response to Jesus, either positively or negatively, was simply an imitation of the response of others? What is the danger in that?**

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 15:27-32.

**How do these verses further demonstrate the lens by which people were viewing Jesus?**

**Mark described how Jesus was crucified between two criminals. What might Jesus' position between such people communicate to those watching? Why?**

The reference to being crucified alongside criminals is probably an allusion to Isaiah 53:12. Because Jesus was saving others, He forfeited His own life. By including the accusation, "He saved others, but He cannot save Himself!", Mark used irony—something true was said about Jesus by a person who did not understand the accuracy of the statement.

**Read Luke 23:32-43. What do you think motivated the thief in verse 39 to hurl abuse at Jesus?**

**Unlike Jesus, the men being crucified on either side of him were guilty criminals receiving just punishment for their sins. Why do you think these two guilty men had such drastically different responses to Jesus?**

Perhaps it was Jesus' prayer for His enemies in verse 34, or perhaps it was the way Jesus embraced His suffering, but one of the two criminals expressed a radically different tone toward Jesus in verse 40. Whatever it was, this criminal's eyes were opened to the identity and power of Jesus. This hopeless man's encounter with Jesus resulted in a changed heart. He rebuked the other criminal saying, "Don't you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment?"

**According to Luke 23:40-41, what did the second criminal understand about himself? About God?**

**What can we learn from this criminal in terms of acknowledging our own desperate condition before God apart from Christ? About owning for ourselves the lens by which we view Jesus?**

APPLICATION

**If we view Jesus from different lenses, then what steps can we take to make sure we're looking through the right one?**

**When is it helpful for another person's lens to shape yours? When is it harmful?**

**What do you learn personally about relationship with God through Jesus' encounter with the two guilty sinners on the crosses beside Him?**

PRAYER

Thank God for the grace He has shown by sending Jesus to die for your sins. Ask Him to remind you of your great need for him. Pray that you would look with fresh eyes on the suffering of the King so that you might truly appreciate what you have been given in Him.