FOUR POINTS CHURCH

Luke 23:26-43 - Christ's Message to Us: Forgiveness!

Opening Discussion: take time to reflect and share about your favorite forgiveness story. Perhaps it was a personal experience, a movie or book, or just a story you heard from someone else. Why do you love this story?

- **Jesus warned that eternal judgment is worse than Christ's temporary judgment.**
  - **Luke 23:26–31 [26] And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. [27] And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. [28] But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. [29] For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' [30] Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' [31] For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (ESV)**
- **Vs 31 - Jesus warned that eternal judgment is worse than Christ's temporary judgment.**
  - This is the seventh time that Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in 70AD.[1]
  - The idea of green wood vs dry wood is a comparison of judgment. Christ took the original and immediate death sentence as a green tree. Green wood can be burned, but it isn't usually consumed. Dry wood, however, burns immediately and completely.
  - Jesus was drawing a comparison between himself and Jerusalem. J.C. Ryle paraphrased what Jesus said: "If the Romans practiced such cruelties on me, who

[1] Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Luke, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 204. See Luke 11:49-51; 13:6-9; 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 20:16; 21:20-24

am a green tree, and the very source of life, what will they do one day to our nation, which is like a barren withered trunk, dead in trespass and sins?"[2]

- Jesus appears to be quoting Hosea 10:8 in his statements to these women. John the revelator repeated Jesus' words in his prophetic letter of Revelation in 6:15-17 and 9:6. This helps us understand why a cyclical view of prophecy is so important, and why it is dangerous to pin every Biblical prophecy in the futurist view. What Jesus was saying definitely applied to Jerusalem, but it was also significant for the chaos of sin throughout history and God's judgment against it.
- I believe Jesus' statement here was even more far reaching than just Jerusalem in 70AD. The judgment that unbelievers face in the afterlife will be much "hotter" and more complete in eternity than the temporary death of Jesus who would rise again in life. Not only that, the judgment that the earth itself awaits will be more devastating than humanity can fathom.
  - Leon Morris said something similar: "If the innocent Jesus suffered thus, what will be the fate of the guilty?"[3]
- Thank goodness we as believers have the hope given to us by the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Discussion Question: Why do you think Jesus would choose this moment of suffering to warn of God's judgment on Jerusalem? Do you see any significance in Jesus addressing "daughters"?

- **Jesus desired God's forgiveness for those under judgment.**
  - **Luke 23:32–38 [32] Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. [33] And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [34] And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. [35] And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" [36] The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine [37] and saying, "If**

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[2] J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Luke* (1858; reprint Cambridge: James Clarke, 1976), 2:466

[3] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 2:377

you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" [38] There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." (ESV)

- **Vs 34 - Jesus desired God's forgiveness for those under judgment.**
  - Jesus didn't just talk from the cross, he fulfilled and spoke scripture from the cross. In offering forgiveness, he was offering the heart of the Biblical narrative, God's desire to redeem humanity from the curse of sin.
    - **Christ's offer of forgiveness on the cross was predicted in Isaiah 53:12.** [12] Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (ESV)
    - **The dividing of Christ's garments was predicted in Psalm 22:16–18.** [16] For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—[17] I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; [18] they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. (ESV)
    - **The offer of sour wine to Christ was prophesied in Psalm 69:19–21.** [19] You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. [20] Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. [21] They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. (ESV)

Discussion: take some time to discuss these prophetic passages, their significance to the Passion of Christ, and why we should take notice. Do you know of any other recorded prophetic fulfillment in the other Gospels concerning the Passion of Christ?

- Jesus was fulfilling the dark side of Genesis 3 in His death, so that he could soon fulfill the bright side of Genesis 3 in His resurrection.
  - **Genesis 3:14–15 [14] The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (ESV)**

- **Hebrews 2:14–15 [14] Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (ESV)**

Discussion: Take some time to look at Genesis 3. Why does God's "providential plan" all flow out of Genesis 3? How can we draw hope from Genesis 3 when we thin about the Gospel for us today?

- **Jesus offered forgiveness to the criminal willing to ask, even though he was already condemned to death as a sinner.**
  - **Luke 23:39–43 [39] One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" [40] But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? [41] And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." [42] And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [43] And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (ESV)**
- **Vs 43 - Jesus offered forgiveness to the criminal willing to ask, even though he was already condemned to death as a sinner.**
  - Both criminals had a conversation with Jesus asking for life.
    - The first criminal asked for life instead of death, the second criminal asked for life after death.
    - The first criminal questioned the ability of the Christ to save out of skepticism, the second criminal defended the ability of Christ to save out of true belief.
    - The first criminal died a condemned man, the second criminal died a pardoned man.
  - Both men had access to God from the same distance, but only one crossed the distance into belief. It has been said that the distance between heaven and hell is about the 12 inches between your head and your heart. The first criminal sought comfort from his head, but the second criminal sought salvation from his heart.

Discussion: Contrast and Compare the major differences between the two criminals. What do you think was the point of "salvation" for the criminal seeking forgiveness? (Consider both the theological implications and the practical application of surrender.)

Question: what is the greatest encouragement we can glean form the repentant criminal as pertains to people who take a long time to surrender to Christ? How can this give us hope with people we have been trying to lead to Christ for a long time?

- Communion and an invitation to partake is the final application.

  - **1 Corinthians 11:23–26 [23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (ESV)**