

5. The word “save” occurs four times in this passage. Throughout the gospel of Luke the word for saved (σῶζω) is used when Jesus drives out demons (8:36), heals a woman suffering from hemorrhages (8:48), brings a synagogue ruler’s daughter back to life (8:50), and heals a blind man (18:42).
 - a. What do the rulers, soldiers and the criminal mean by “save?”
 - b. How does the way the word is used throughout the gospel of Luke enlarge our understanding of what it means to be “saved?”
 - c. How does Jesus ultimately “save” others?

EXTRAORDINARY FAITH AND UNCOMMON GRACE (vv. 40-43)

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

1. If Jesus looked anything like the bruised and beaten figure in “The Passion of the Christ,” how could this man possibly look at him and see God’s Messiah, the Chosen One of God?
2. How does the phrase, “We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve” describe the plight of humanity apart from Christ?
3. “Today” is an interesting word in the gospel of Luke. After reading from the Isaiah scroll in Nazareth, Jesus proclaims, “Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21). In the home of Zacchaeus he announces, “Today salvation has come to this house (19:9). Here he reassures a criminal who has exhibited extraordinary faith, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”
How does the word “today” describe the immediacy and extent of the grace that God extends to us in Christ?
4. In what ways does Jesus offer this man so much more than he asked for?
5. What does this passage teach us about the heart of God?

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2023



LUKE

A PROMISE KEPT

THEY CRUCIFIED HIM | LUKE 23:26-43

Several years ago, Mel Gibson’s, “The Passion of the Christ” offered us one of the most grisly and perhaps accurate portrayals of the cross in cinematic history.

I remember sitting in a crowded theatre next to a young lady, that appeared to be one of the toughest gals I have ever encountered. She had a classic goth look—dark eye makeup, black leather, metal studs, chains, explicit tattoos, and body piercings. She had a visceral reaction to the images on the scene. At times burying her head and wincing, at other times openly weeping. At a climatic point in the movie, she stood up, cursed out loud and stormed out of theatre. I looked for her in the lobby after the movie, but never saw her again.

While the “Passion of the Christ” offered us an unparalleled window into the horrors of the cross, the gospels for the most part spare us the gory details. This is especially true in the gospel of Luke. When we reach the climatic moment, he has been preparing us for throughout his gospel, he simply writes, “they crucified him.”

Luke is far more interested in the grace that flows from the cross, than the horrors of crucifixion. Luke’s story might better be entitled “The Compassion of the Christ.” He records Christ’s gracious response to the women who mourned for him, the soldiers who drove the spikes into his hands and feet, and a thief who was condemned along side him.

THE JOURNEY TO THE CROSS (vv. 26-32)

²⁶ As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.

²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰ Then “ ‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!” ’ ^{p 31} For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

1. Who are the people who accompany Jesus in his journey to the cross? What role are they playing in Luke’s narrative?

2. Luke probably includes this scene because it calls to mind Zechariah’s prophecy:

They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son (Zechariah 12:10).

How do the prophetic portraits enhance our understanding and appreciation for the cross?

3. How does Jesus demonstrate grace and compassion for these women?

4. Jesus himself wept for the city of Jerusalem. Luke tells us:

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you (Luke 19:41-44).”

He goes on to describe the impending destruction of the city along with the horrors of the last days in Luke 21:5-38.

In what ways should the cross cause us to weep for ourselves and the people of our generation?

JESUS’ PRAYER FROM THE CROSS (v. 33-34)

³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” [†] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

1. Why do you think Luke spares us the gory details of Jesus’ crucifixion?
2. When Jesus prays, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” who does he have in mind?

3. Jesus had taught his disciples, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27-28).”

What does Jesus’ prayer from the cross teach us about the extent of our love for our enemies?

4. Once again, Luke notices a detail with obvious echoes from the Old Testament. In Psalm 22 David writes, “They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment (v. 18).”

Why might casting lots for Jesus’ clothes be particularly humiliating?

RIDICULE AND SCORN AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS (vv. 35-39)

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar

³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” ³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: *this is the king of the jews.*

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

1. There are a couple more echoes from the book of Psalms in this scene. In the same Psalm we quoted in the previous scene, David also writes,

“All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. ⁸ “He trusts in the Lord,” they say, “let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him (Psalm 22:7-8).”

In Psalm 69 he writes, “They put gall in my food, and gave me vinegar to drink (v. 21).”

How do these Old Testament allusions broaden our appreciation of the cross?

2. In stark contrast to the grace and compassion Jesus displays on the cross, Luke records the mockery and scorn Jesus endured from the rulers, soldiers and then one of the criminals, at the foot of the cross. How does Luke describe their insults?

3. What is the one thing the crowds think Jesus could do to prove that he is the Messiah or God’s Chosen One?

4. How does Jesus actually prove that he is indeed the Messiah, God’s Chosen One?