

FORGIVENESS
Example of Forgiveness
Luke 23:33-34

April 11, 2021 am

HDBC

God has blessed us with five senses. **Touch, Sight, Sound, Taste, Smell.** Wonderful ways to experience the world around us. Each adds a particular element to how we interact with our world. Each one adds to our knowledge.

You can see a **skunk**, but haven't really experienced it until you **smell it**.

You can see a **musician** playing, but can't experience it without **hearing it**.

You can smell **ribs being grilled**, but can't appreciate them **unless you taste**.

Imagine you are standing outside the wall of ancient Jerusalem at the site of the crucifixion of Jesus. There is horror what you see. You are nauseated by the smell of sweat and blood hanging in the air. But **what you hear** impacts you the most. Listen with me to the sounds of crucifixion as Jesus died!

Sounds of Activity

Ping of hammer on nail as it is driven through flesh & wood.

Thud as cross is raised & dropped into the hole in the ground.

Dice being thrown as the soldiers gambled for his robe.

Sounds of Distress

Cry from victims as nails were driven through hands and feet.

Weeping from friends/relatives watching the spectacle.

Moaning of a mother watching her son die.

Sounds of Ridicule

Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!

If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!

He saved others, but He cannot save Himself!

Bitter words, filled with sarcasm, venom and hatred. Irreverent and brash. Intended to cut and hurt. Intended to *add* to the shame that was already enveloping the naked Savior.

Wasn't it enough that He was being killed?

Weren't the **thorns** sharp enough?
Wasn't the **scourging** enough?
Weren't the **nails** piercing his hands and feet enough?

For some, apparently not. *They launched a verbal barrage* at him, designed to **bruise his soul** along with the body that was already bruised. They had broken the body. Now they would **break His spirit**. So they **dipped their words in poison** and launched them at His bleeding heart.

And then, cutting through the **sound waves of sin** came the sweet words of the Savior. Like a cool breeze on a scorching day they arrested the attention of the crowd. Words of kindness and love that exposed the **ugliness of sin**, while shining a bright light on the **beauty of forgiveness**. Hear them with me.

READ Luke 23:33-34

What are we to make of this prayer of Jesus? It was . . .

1. Surprising

There are certain words that would be expected from those being crucified. Guilty or not, we would expect them to have contempt for their executioners. Curse. Insult. Lash out. Not Jesus. He did not bite back. Didn't say *come up here and say that to my face*, or *You just wait until resurrection day...* These were not found on the lips of Jesus.

How was Jesus able to withstand their insults without retaliating? Peter gives us some insight in 1 Peter 2:23

and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting {Himself} to Him who judges righteously;

He left the justice to God. He knew that God was faithful. Didn't make a list so He could get at them later. **Instead. . . He spoke in their defense.**

We are surprised, but should not be. He was simply practicing what he had already preached. Had he not said . . .

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you

Jesus was demonstrating in real life what He had taught his disciples and others. His words set a high standard and now He is proving that He could live up to that standard. His prayer was surprising. But it was also . . .

2. Revealing

1) Reveals something about people

People are sinful and in need of forgiveness.

This is a **graphic illustration** of the sinful nature of man. These people were fulfilling the prophetic word found in the words of the apostle, John.

In Him was life and the life was the light of men. And light shines in the darkness did not comprehend it.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

The actions & attitudes revealed at the crucifixion show us just how ugly and sinful people can be. If anyone was in need of forgiveness, these people were. They were rejecting and killing the Son of God.

But who was Jesus praying for? Pilate? Surely. The religious leaders? Absolutely! The Roman soldiers? Yes! But not just them. They were not the only ones who crucified Him that day. I participated! My sins were included. My sins put Him on the cross. His prayer not only revealed the depravity of those who were present but of all people. For the Bible says ***all have sinned***.

Not only does it reveal the sinfulness of people but also our **ignorance**. Hear the words of Jesus, *for they do not know what they are doing*.

Be assured that they knew they were killing an innocent man. But there was a spiritual darkness that blinded their eyes. That darkness could only be lifted by the power of the gospel that would be founded in the very thing that was happening to Jesus.

Ignorance did not excuse their actions. Jesus was not saying they were not accountable. He was looking at them as **sheep without a shepherd**. They needed something that they were not even aware they lacked. So, He prayed for them. But it also . . .

2) Reveals something about God

God loves sinful people and offers forgiveness. The death of Christ is a testimony to the love of God.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:8

The crucifixion scene is not simply an execution. It is a demonstration of Divine love in action. God loves people. **All people**. Even those who hated and scorned His son.

3) Reveals something about Jesus

Rather than declare their condemnation, He interceded on their behalf. There was no conflict between He and the Father. They want the same thing. Not only did He loves all people in general, but He loves all people specifically. And that included. His **executioners**, His **tormentors**.

Was He asking God to forget about justice? Ignore it? No! Justice for their sins was being satisfied in his death. Therefore, He could legitimately pray for their forgiveness.

Are there some people that you are not really sure you want forgiven? Are there some people that you really don't want to find in Heaven because of what they have done for you or to others?

Think about some of the vile and wicked individuals who have left a swath of pain and heartache because of their actions. **Hitler. Mussolini. Stalin.** Now think about individuals who have injured and harmed you.

To pray for their forgiveness does not nullify justice. To offer forgiveness to them does not nullify justice. Forgiveness and justice are not mutually exclusive. Forgiveness does not nullify justice. It simply means the justice has been absorbed by another.

3. Powerful

Within a few hours that prayer was being answered.

1) The criminal dying next to Jesus

He cried out in faith to Jesus for salvation. He was forgiven and entered paradise with Jesus within moments.

2) The soldier watching at the foot of the cross

This seasoned soldier had seen the blood of hundreds, if not thousands of crucified victims. But when He saw Jesus die, He knew Jesus was different. He realized and testified that Jesus was the son of God.

The power of that prayer was not only seen in the salvation of a couple of unlikely candidates at his death, but was seen in the way Christ-followers lived and died. **I'm thinking of Stephen**, the first martyr among that first generation of believers. He certainly **learned from the example of Jesus**.

4. Conditional

Not everyone who heard that prayer was saved. We know that God desires for all to be saved, but not all are saved. Why? **This prayer is conditional**. Jesus prayed for their forgiveness, but that forgiveness is based upon the individuals willingness to trust Christ with his life. One criminal was forgiven, but not the other. One soldier was forgiven, but not the others.

Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. Acts 10:43

Jesus is the . . . **Source of our Forgiveness.**

He is also the . . . **Example of Forgiveness.**

We can experience our own forgiveness because of the death of Christ.

We can offer forgiveness for others because of the words of Christ.