

For Real 03: "Say What?!"

Luke 23 and Psalm 32

Big Idea: Jesus demonstrated the scope of God's love and forgiveness on the cross when He forgave those who crucified Him.

Most Precious Gift

Forgiveness may be one of life's most precious gifts. A strange mystery of humanity, it's almost impossible to grant, and just as difficult to accept. All of us have experienced both sides of this phenomenon at one time or another, and still the concept can loom heavy over the parties involved – **"How can I forgive? How could I be forgiven?"**

Jesus on a Cross

Most people facing death talk about their family or their faith, possibly even their regrets and their fear. Jesus had every reason to speak words of judgment. Every reason to speak words of condemnation and wrath. Instead, He speaks words of forgiveness. If anyone ever had the right to be angry, it was Jesus. If anyone ever had the right to demand justice, it was Jesus. If anyone ever had the right to refuse forgiveness, it was Jesus. Yet His first recorded words from the cross are: **"Father, forgive them."** For real? Yes. For real.

Someone Like Me?

The cross answers one of the most common questions people ask: **"Can God forgive someone like me?"** The answer is found in the people standing around the cross. Roman soldiers. Religious hypocrites. Cowards. Liars. Doubters. Mockers. Criminals. And Jesus says: **"Father, forgive them."** If God can forgive the people who nailed Jesus to the cross, He can forgive you. The enemy wants you to believe: "Not this sin. Not this failure. Not this addiction. Not this secret," but the cross declares something different. The grace of God is always greater than the sin of man.

David's Sin

One of the reasons Psalm 32 is so powerful is because David describes what unconfessed sin feels like. He says: **"My bones wasted away."** His strength was drained. His joy disappeared. His conscience tormented him. His testimony is simple: **The burden became unbearable until he brought it to God.**

You Are Not Your Worst Moment

Some people define themselves by their greatest failure. David could have been remembered only as an adulterer. Peter only as a denier. Paul only as a persecutor. Yet God wrote a different story. The cross reminds us that our worst moment does not have to become our permanent identity. He can forgive you. A clear conscience today does not depend on a clean past. That is the beauty and power of forgiveness.

Family Night – Read Luke 23:32-49

- **Elementary School** – Ask, "How many others were crucified with Jesus that day? What did Jesus say to the people who were crucifying Him? What was the last thing Jesus said? What did the Roman soldier think of Jesus?"
- **Middle/ High School** – Ask, "Why is it so difficult for us to accept or grant forgiveness? What makes a clear conscience so valuable? What do you think motivated the Roman soldier to say what he said about Jesus?"

Prayer: "Father, Thank You for your forgiveness through Jesus. Help us when we need to forgive others. Amen."