

## GOOD FRIDAY 2024 HANDOUT How Far Must God Go?

### ***The Question has been asked, "How Far Must God Go to Prove His Love for YOU?"***

- Matthew 27:27-31 and Luke 23:32-49 Answer that Question Perfectly!

In These two Texts We see the Human Cruelty in Matthew and Lukes description of the Crucifixion! There is No Way to Pretty it Up! It is Simply the Most Cruel Death Imaginable and Jesus Did it ALL for US!

All the Power, Might, Majesty, and Glory of God Hangs there: Being spit upon, a sword thrust into his side, humiliated, left to die one of the cruelest deaths man could conceive. Jesus has All the Power of God, Yet He does NOT seek Retribution from his Father? Instead...With Unwavering Love, he says, "Father forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

The Question Valid still today Applies to Us. **How FAR Must God Go to Prove that He Loves You?**

- I Want Us to Get a Clear Mental Picture of that Scene...THREE Crosses, Jesus in the Middle, and a Thief on Either Side. When We have that Picture before Us We Will See that there are NO Lengths to which God will NOT Go to Offer the Gift of Divine Love To US.
- **We will see the Key Meaning of the Cross is Sacrificial...Steadfast... Unconditional LOVE.**

William Barclay's Commentary on this Text: He says Atonement and Forgiveness of Our Sins is NOT Enough to Describe what Jesus did for US On the Cross. For Us, the Cross is the Ultimate Sign of God's Complete and Unequivocal LOVE for ALL Humanity.

Barclay says: **"Nothing you do can make me NOT Love You...You can disappoint me, break my heart and grieve my Spirit, you can spit on me, scourge me, beat me, ridicule me, and even kill me -- But You can NOT make Me Stop Loving You. See that Cross? I love you like that!"**

The "unrepentant thief" hanging next to Jesus sees nothing of that gift in Jesus' self-sacrifice. Instead he mocks Jesus and says, "Are you Not the Messiah? Save Yourself and Us!" (Luke 23:39)

The "Repentant thief" asks the one who continues to mock Jesus: "Do you Not Fear God? If this is, Jesus, God's Messiah, have you No fear in continuing to hurl abuse at him?"

Luke Records NO Response from the Unrepentant Thief, BUT leaves it that...This man has NO Room for the Possibility of God Working in His Life Through What Jesus was doing!

**That's a Scary Place to Be...Locked in a Prison of Absolute Loneliness and Lostness!** There is NO Room in His Heart for Even the Fear of God. And, therefore, there is No Room for Hope.

But the "Repentant Thief", the one often called the "Good" Thief Believes that God is Working in Jesus. And He Simply Believes. **NO WORKS, Nothing he can do to Qualify or Appease}** And hanging from his Own Cross that Thief Makes His Choice: *"Jesus, Remember Me when You come into Your Kingdom."*

Jesus Turns to this Convicted Felon, Who has Chosen to Fear and Trust In God's Love in His Final Moments. Jesus says, "Today, You will be with Me in Paradise."

- Jesus Offers Him the Ultimate Gift of Love: Forgiveness and Eternity with God.

Think About It...If Jesus were Not the Messiah, then how could He promise this thief, *"This Day You Will be with Me in Paradise?"* Only the Messiah, or a deluded mad-man, would make such a promise.

**And for each of Us...The Choice Must be made. Which is He?**

- **There is No Middle Ground to be Found here...Luke does Not Intend to Allow Us to Avoid the Question...Either Jesus is the Messiah, or He is Not!**

And, if we decide that Jesus is, indeed, the Messiah, a Messiah capable of actually offering the repentant thief Paradise on that very day, that tells us much about a Messiah who is able to make such a promise.

- Luke's story tells us that One Rejects the Messiah, while the other Asks to be Remembered {Believes and Receives} in Jesus' Kingdom.

**KEY: Jesus goes far beyond "Remembering" him Jesus Promises him Paradise!**

- Something that Only the Messiah, the Son of God, could have offered.

*Looking at these two thieves helps Us to Understand just who this Jesus is who could offer the gift of Paradise to the one who asked Only to be Remembered.*

**It also tells us how to answer Jesus' Most Important Question to All of Us. Do You Remember What that Question Is?**

- Long before the Cross in Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20 Jesus asked us, "But You, who do You say that I Am?" That is the Ultimate Question of Christian Faith.
- Let me remind you of the clearest answer to that question. In Matthew 16:16 Peter , Answers "You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

It is belief in that Truth that causes Us to Reflect On the Sacrifice Jesus Made for Us. And to renew our Faith in the One who offers Himself as a {FREE} Gift of Divine Love. And from that gift flows Peace, Salvation and Eternal Life to those who believe that He is their Lord and Savior.

- Jesus is the One who says, in Barclay's words, "Nothing You Do Can Make Me NOT Love You! See that Cross? I Love You Like That!"
- It is this Unconditional Sacrificial Love that Jesus showed from the Cross that gives Us the Answer to His Great Question of Faith, "Who Do You Say That I Am?"
- With the Apostle Peter and Millions of Faithful Christians throughout All the centuries since, We Can Boldly say, "You, Lord, are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God."

**Beyond Your Salvation...Here is What that Means to You Tonight?**

There is Nothing You Can Do that Jesus Will NOT LOVE YOU!!! It Removes Your Guilt of the Past...and Your Fears for Today and Tomorrow! It Causes Us to Praise God in All Things as We have Confidence that He Will Not Allow Anything in Our Lives that He has NOT Ordained.

All of human history had been Moving toward one Climactic Moment: From the first hint in Gen 3:15 that the serpent would strike the heel of this God man to Simeon's prophecy to Mary that a sword would pierce her soul. For Centuries History Held its Breath—Waiting for the Promise to be Fulfilled. Those Prophecies were Finally Fulfilled as Jesus Gave up His Spirit on the Cross.

**Jesus said, "It is Finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30**

**At that Moment, Jesus, the Great High Priest Became OUR Sacrificial Lamb.**

Multitudes of Prophecies became Reality in the life and death of this God-man Jesus. He Turned Himself Over to Death so that His Murderers could be Forgiven. His Death Removed the Sins of His own Mother...who Watched with Sorrow as the Prophecies Became Reality on that Hideous Cross.

**His Willing Sacrifice...Sufficiently and Completely Covered the Sins of Every Man and Women...Past, Present, and Future that Will Receive This FREE Gift.**

And When Jesus Rose from the Dead...Sin's Hold On Mankind Was Broken...Satan was Rendered Inoperative...And We are Free to Live for Him!

**"LIFE" POINT: Because Christ said, "It Is Finished...We Have Hope!**