



# First Baptist Church Selmer

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE • AT THE CROSS • LUKE 23:26-49 • 4/2/2023

## MAIN POINT

Even at the point of death, Jesus had you on His mind.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is one of the nicest things that anyone has ever done for you? Was it a surprise?**

**Have you ever had a chance to repay him or her? Could you, if you wanted to?**

**Tell about a time that you witnessed someone being ungrateful for a gift? How did it make you feel?**

An unexpected surprise is fun, sometimes embarrassing, and certainly, a surprise act of kindness makes us feel special. If someone surprises us with an expensive gift, trip, or even something as unexpected as a genuine compliment, it gives us great joy. Sometimes, a gift might be so kind that it is a little embarrassing, and we may not even feel worthy of receiving the gift. Kindness has the ability to humble us.

There has never been an act of kindness greater than Jesus laying down His life for our sins. On the cross, Jesus gave us the gift of His own righteousness in exchange for our debt of sin. We can never repay this act of grace. The best we can do is live a life of joy on account of it, follow Jesus with all of our heart, and let others know that the gift of eternal life can be theirs as well because of the gift of God's Son.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 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 it they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (ESV)*

**Why do you think that Luke included the detail about Simon carrying Jesus' cross?**

**Is Jesus' response to the "Daughters of Jerusalem" surprising to you? Why did Jesus say this to them?**

We know that Jesus is the Son of God. The Son of God is all-powerful, and yet here we see Jesus in His humiliation, too weakened to carry His own cross. Luke added this detail to show us the humanity, and the frailty, of Jesus. Jesus is fully God, but He is also fully human. He suffered, and He struggled. In the end, someone had to help Him carry His cross.

Jesus calls on the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for themselves and not for Him. He is calling on them to cry out for forgiveness, both for themselves and for the people of Israel. Someday, judgment is coming. The sin of Israel, and all of us as individuals, is great. Jesus tells us to weep and mourn for ourselves. Jesus' saying about the "green wood" is probably an analogy from His day. Green wood is very difficult to burn, so you have to be persistent to set fire to it. Jesus is asking, if they will crucify Him, the Son of God who is completely innocent, how wicked must their hearts be?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 23:32-43.

*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 you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' 38 There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'*

*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)*

**What do you think of Jesus' prayer in this passage? Why didn't they know what they were doing?**

**What can we learn from the second criminal's request of Jesus and from Jesus' answer to him?**

The people who crucified Jesus did not know that He was the Son of God. Many of them probably joined in the taunting simply because others were doing it. Jesus, in His mercy, prayed that His Father would be merciful to them. Even when He was dying and being mocked for it, Jesus responded with kindness.

The second criminal on the cross teaches us about the grace and mercy found in repentance. This criminal realized that Jesus had done nothing wrong; the second criminal had the faith to see that even though Jesus was crucified, Jesus was the way to heaven.

Jesus' answer is one of the most hopeful and gracious answers in the Bible. Jesus tells the criminal, "I assure you: Today you will be with Me in paradise." First, we know by the criminal's own confession that whatever he did, he deserved death for it. Second, this thief had no time to do anything to merit salvation. He, too, was dying on a cross. His simple admission of his sin and his request for Jesus to remember him was enough that, on that very day, he would be with Christ in heaven. That is amazing grace! Belief, confession, and repentance are all that are required to join Jesus in paradise.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 23:44-49.

*44 "It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus,*

*calling out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying 'Certainly this man was innocent!' 48 And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things." (ESV)*

**Why do you think that darkness covered the land? Why did the curtain of the sanctuary split down the middle?**

**What made the centurion praise God? Why do you think those who knew Jesus “stood at a distance”?**

The creation reacted to the death of the Creator. The sun itself was darkened when Jesus breathed His last, as if creation itself mourned His passing. The Temple curtain was put in place to separate the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple. Behind the curtain was the Ark of the Covenant, which is where the presence of God dwelt. The High Priest could only enter this place once per year to offer atonement for the people. If anyone else entered at any time, God would strike him dead. The curtain tore because Jesus' atonement on the cross made the Temple obsolete. No longer would God's presence dwell only behind the curtain. Soon, He would indwell everyone who called on the name of Jesus.

After witnessing Jesus' death, the centurion was convinced that Jesus was a righteous man. In Mark 15:39, we know that “when the centurion, who was standing opposite Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “This man really was God's Son!” The prayers, the darkening sun, and Jesus' kindness and mercy to the very end convinced the centurion that Jesus was exactly who He had claimed to be.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How should the story of Jesus' crucifixion help shape our church fellowship? What does Jesus' example from the cross teach us?**

**How does the truth that the Holy Spirit now indwells every believer encourage you?**

# PRAYER

In a time of group prayer, thank the Father for sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins. Ask the Father to help us remember that we are saved not by our works, but by the grace and mercy of Christ. Pray that we will be bold enough and humble enough to share the joy of Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection with others.

# COMMENTARY

## | LUKE 23:26-49

23:26 Simon of Cyrene was staying outside Jerusalem and coming in from the country to worship each day during the feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus was unable to carry the cross any farther after His earlier beating (22:63), so it was placed on Simon's back. Simon may have been part of the synagogue of the Cyrenians mentioned in Ac 6:9. Mark 15:21 mentions the names of Simon's sons (Rm 16:13 may refer to one of those sons).

23:27-31 Jesus told the crowds who were mourning His unjust crucifixion that they should weep for their own families because of the future destruction of Jerusalem. It would be preferable not to have children in such awful times. Jesus then cited Hos 10:8, where it is said that people will request landslides to hide them from the military onslaught. The proverbial statement in Luke 23:31 implies that if things are this bad for an innocent man in a time of peace (when the wood is green), they will be much worse for those who deserve judgment during a time of war (when it is dry).

23:32-33 Being executed between two... criminals fulfilled the prophecy of Isa 53:12, as well as Jesus' words in Lk 22:37. The place where Jesus was crucified was called The Skull. In Aramaic, the name is Golgotha. The Latin equivalent is Calvary.

23:34 Jesus forgave His executioners because they acted in ignorance of who He really was. Some early manuscripts do not include the first part of this verse. The phrase they divided His clothes and cast lots fulfilled Ps 22:18.

23:35-39 Four different groups (the people in general, the leaders, the soldiers, and one of the criminals being crucified) scoffed at Jesus and challenged Him to save Himself. None of them believed that Jesus was the Messiah... the King of the Jews, even though the official inscription above His head on the cross charged Him with posing as "the King of the Jews."

23:40-43 In the midst of this display of unbelief and mockery, the other criminal came to understand the difference between his own guilt and Jesus' innocence ( this man has done nothing wrong). He also realized that Jesus was the Messiah and asked to take part in His coming kingdom. Jesus assured him that, after death, he would immediately be reunited with Him in paradise (eternal life beyond the grave; see 2Co 12:4).

23:44-45 The three hours of darkness at midday (from noon... until three) was a sign of divine judgment against sin (which Jesus became on the cross) and the sinners who unjustly executed the Son of God. Matthew 27:51 explains that the splitting of the curtain of the sanctuary (between the holy place and the holy of holies in the temple) was caused by a great earthquake. The torn curtain symbolized open access to God, made possible by the death of Christ (see note at 22:20).

23:46 While expressing faith in God by reciting Ps 31:5, Jesus breathed His last. Jesus was placed on the cross at about 9:00 a.m. (Mk 15:25) and died after only six hours—an unusually short time. Crucifixion victims sometimes lingered for two or three days before death occurred.

23:47 Compared to the parallel accounts, Luke muted the centurion's confession. Here the centurion merely observed that Jesus was truly righteous (not a criminal in any respect), whereas in Mt 27:54 and Mk 15:39 he is reported as acknowledging that Jesus is the Son of God.

23:48-49 Striking their chests could be a sign of grief, though in Lk 18:13 it appears to reflect contrition before the Lord. Significantly, the women disciples from Galilee, who had generously supported Jesus' ministry financially (see note at 8:1-3), are spotlighted among those who were watching Him die on the cross. They stuck with Him even after the male disciples abandoned Him.