

Dying Words – Part 1

Luke 23:32 – 43

I. Intro

- A. Tonight, look at dying words of our Lord and Savior – two parts; season of Lent – March 6 thru April 18, leading up to Easter Sunday
- B. May have heard of 7 last sayings of Christ on cross, Luke records only 3 of these sayings
- C. **READ Luke 23:32 – 43**
- D. Talk about first two parts of Jesus' last words tonight: Forgive and Paradise

II. Forgive

- A. If any of us had to endure the suffering, agony anywhere near what Jesus did before, and on the cross, at the hands of other people, forgiveness would probably be the last thing on our mind
- B. Forgiveness can mean many different things to different people; **ASK:** How would you define forgiveness? Any of these definitions different than what Jesus' definition of forgiveness would be?
- C. **Question:** Ever thought about Jesus still teaching His disciples, and us, even while hanging on the cross; His final words not just some haphazard mumblings, but final teachings from Son of God as He's taking His last breaths
- D. Mentioned in middle of season of Lent which is time of preparation of our hearts going into Easter; **ASK:** How can these words, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do*, prepare us for Easter?
- E. **ASK:** What about the relationship between love and forgiveness – do you have to love someone to be able to forgive them? Can you love someone and not forgive them?
- F. **Illustration:** Person in office this week very upset about the way someone specific had been treating them – angry; asked them, were they beyond the point of at least attempting to forgive that person; response – they had forgiven them but they were still talking about getting revenge
- G. Quotes on forgiveness:
 - i. *Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that; hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that* (MLK Jr.)
 - ii. *Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart* (Corrie Ten Boom)
- H. Always remember – when we forgive, it brings honor and glory to God

III. Paradise

- A. It's been said, *For our sakes, God went where He had no business to go to fix a problem that we had no business asking to be fixed.*
- B. Just imagine, one criminal who also being executed (crucified), in his last moments turns to Jesus and says, *Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom;* and Jesus responds, *Today you will be with me in paradise*
- C. Just seen Jesus forgiving as He's dying, and now we see it again but this time instead of forgiving the unrepentant, now forgiving the repentant
- D. When we forgive those who are "unrepentant", those who don't deserve our forgiveness, that's more for our soul (conscience); but forgiving those who are repentant (those who seek our forgiveness), that for their soul (conscience)
- E. One criminal's reaction to this whole situation: **READ v. 39**
- F. The other criminal's reaction: **READ v. 40, 41**
- G. The only place in scripture where Jesus uses the word *paradise*; original Greek word means *garden* or *park*; in Genesis, when it speaks of Garden of Eden, the same Greek word is used – word for *paradise*
- H. **ASK:** How many have ever been to some park somewhere? What thoughts come to mind when you think of a park? Place of fun, joy, pleasure, happiness, rest
- I. **Question:** Do we ever pre-judge some people as "scum" or "unworthy", and others as "good" and "deserving"? **ASK:** How does our vision of people match up with the way Jesus saw this criminal (thief)?
- J. **ASK:** Do we see God's grace at work in this account? Yes
- K. **Question:** Can you see God's grace at work in your own story?

IV. Close

- A. **Prayer:** *Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient [people]. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Also Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. In Your name we pray, Amen.*