

Today Thou Shalt Be With Me in Paradise

Luke 23:32-43

Introduction

- A. The end of life is usually not a very pretty picture.
- B. For these three men it would be hard to make it worse – criminals and crucifixion.
- C. The description by the Physician Luke is a divine revelation – event is revelatory.
- D. What are we supposed to learn – from this dismal scene of human suffering?

I. The Participants – the Three Men.

- A. The two criminals – we can only guess at their crimes.
 - 1. Their society had had enough with them – “Crucify them.”
See them at the end of a wasted life – criminals, breakers of the law & society.
 - 2. Two human beings – gender – men.
Created by divine choice – not by their parents – but by God.
God had created them because He wanted them.
Created to live in fellowship with Him – in love, joy and peace.
But, a different story, lives lived in selfishness, dissatisfaction, and anxiety.
 - 3. They represent the picture of all humanity.
One challenged the Lord Jesus – his Creator – “Save yourself and us.”
True to form – still selfish – the hint, “I’ll believe if you get us out of here.”
One response of sinful mankind – no understanding, repentance, confession.
One understood about the future – the kingdom – One in charge.
Perhaps due to teaching in the home – did he have praying parents?
No self-protection, desire for coming kingdom: submission – faith.
Another response of humanity – recognition, repentance, faith, surrender
- B. The Lord Jesus – hanging between the two criminals.
 - 1. May have looked very much like the other two.
 - 2. Days before asked Disciples: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”
 - 3. If ask about the past of the criminals – rebellion, crime, punishment, selfishness.
 - 4. Ask about the Lord Jesus – we’re looking back into eternity.
One of three eternal and infinite persons.
Involved in Decree of Redemption – the promised Deliverer, Redeemer.
The “giving” of the Father. The “coming” of the Son. The “involvement” of Spirit.
See birth of a baby – a teenage Jewish girl. Life of ministry to others – and NOW.

5. How did the Lord Jesus look upon those two criminals?
C. S. Lewis said it well: *“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Dullest – worship – or else such a horror – meet only in nightmare.”*
He saw them as they truly were – His image – great value – person VS works.
Persons who could if they believed – develop into spiritual, holy beings.

II. The Transactions – What was Happening.

- A. The transaction with the criminal who was selfish, cynical unbelieving.
 1. Created with ability to choose for God – or against Him.
 2. Hear the choice he made: selfish, cynical and unbelieving.
 3. Lord Jesus allowed him to have the future he had chosen.
- B. The transactions with the criminal who asked to be remembered.
 1. Different choice – believing – seeking relationship – “Your kingdom.”
 2. His faith made it possible for Lord Jesus to forgive him. All grace
 3. His promised future – “Paradise.” (3 times) “Tree of Life.”
 4. These two responses / men – represent whole human race.
 5. See in them the beginning of two eternal destinies: Hell and Heaven.
- C. The Transaction Involving the Lord Jesus and Whole Human Race.
 1. Invisible – nearly silent except for these SEVEN WORDS.
 2. John Baptist: “Behold the Lamb of God who is taking away the sin of the world.”
 3. A transaction of substitution, of redemptive value, of vicarious power.
 4. *(2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
 5. *(Isaiah 53:6 NIV) We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Conclusion.

- A. Which criminal represents you? Tell by how we live: selfish or for the Lord Jesus?
- B. There is a PROMISE held out to each member of the human race.
- C. Because of His transaction and grace -- “Today, you COULD be with Me in paradise.”
- D. William Cowper (d. 1800) “The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, and there may I, though sinful too, wash all my sins away.”