

Good Friday Service “The Forgiving Love of the Cross”

April 7, 2023 Message Notes

Isaiah 53 (NIV) Prophecy about the Savior (given to Isaiah from God around 740 BC)

¹Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ²He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. ⁴Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. ⁹He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. ¹¹After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹²Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Learning from 3 of Jesus’ Last Words from the Cross (from Luke’s Gospel)

Luke 23:32-46 (NIV) ³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, ①“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁵The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” ³⁶The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” ³⁸There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴²Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³Jesus answered him, ②“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

⁴⁴It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Jesus called out with a loud voice, ③“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

① “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

- The people present not only do not understand what Jesus is accomplishing (substitutionary death for the salvation of mankind), they actually taunt him. Jesus’ words in verse 34 show his kindness and compassion, beyond what any mortal man could convey. These words fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 53.
- Ordinarily in this situation, a person would react with curses (“Who do you think I’m doing this for?”), but Jesus did not respond at all. He came into the world to experience this affliction, fully receiving the punishment that was our due.

- These are not words that can be uttered towards those who seek to kill you. God’s love is coming to fruition here, but no one, not even the disciples, understood.
- We, too, are surrounded by this higher level of tremendous love. No matter what we have done or what we are thinking about right now, God has forgiven us.
- The word translated here as “forgive them” is *aphiemi*, which means to let go of, to entrust, to deposit. We are to entrust all our sins to God through Christ, whereby they are completely removed.

② “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise”

- This man is the only person recorded to have been saved while Jesus was doing the actual work of saving humanity.
- His salvation tells us that it is never too late to believe in the Lord and be saved.
- The moment a person turns their heart to God, no matter what terrible things they have done, this man’s experience proves that God can completely save and forgive them.
- Although this man had no time left to confess all of his previous sins, it is clear from his words to the other thief that a change had taken place in his heart.
- The implication of his words, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom (42) is thought-provoking. What was the feeling behind his words, “Remember me” that he spoke at the end of a life that left him with nothing but regrets? This feeling is not limited only to criminals. Rather, it is something felt by many people at the end of their lives.
- To expand on his words: “Lord, I am sorry. I am a helpless person and I know that I am not in a position to ask you to forgive me or save me. In spite of that, I dare to ask you, Lord, to please have mercy on this fool. Please do not forget me, but if you would remember me occasionally, how grateful I would be. I am very sorry, but I would appreciate it so much,” he seems to say through his fear.
- This desire to be remembered reflects the fundamental human desire for approval and affirmation that we all share. How does Jesus respond to this request? This is the most important point of our study today: Jesus adds the words, “truly I tell you” (literally Amen), offering news of joy beyond anything the thief could have imagined.
- Even if Jesus had responded with something like, “I’ll be watching over you from heaven,” the man would probably have been grateful. That might be a bit far from him in hell, but wasn’t that what he was hoping for? But Jesus’ answer was, “You will be with me in paradise today,” meaning “You will be with me from now on.” This is a level of grace that seems impossible, but examine Jesus’ tone and expression at this moment (body language). Remember that this is the gospel that is also addressed to us.
- No matter what you have been through in your life, God has the power to forgive you, heal you, and rebuild your life. He has assured you that He will be with you forever. What wonderful words! Do you understand that Jesus is assuring you, too, that everything will be all right?

③ “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”

- When Jesus delivered these words, he knew that he had completed the work of salvation, so he yielded his spirit to his heavenly father. Luke takes this man’s salvation event and emphasizes that we, too, can be forgiven and saved.
- At this moment, the curtain that separated the sanctuary of the temple from the Holy of Holies tore in half from top to bottom. What a climax! This tearing of the curtain that represented the blocked relationship between God and man eloquently illustrated that it had been removed.

Conclusion

1. What would happen if we were honest about our feelings, as this man was. Even if you have never lived a praiseworthy life, when you turn your heart over to the Lord, he will overwhelm you with the blessings of salvation.
2. The cross of Jesus has made a way for us to recover the genuine friendship we have longed for and the beautiful parent-child relationship with God for which we were designed. Let us undertake this journey with God once again.