

# Further up, Further in

## Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT  
MOUNTAIN  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

### “TWO THIEVES, TWO RESPONSES”

For individual study or group discussion

Our Palm Sunday passage in *Luke* focuses on the sacrificial Savior. In today's reading, we learn that the Kingdom of God is open to all repentant believers. Encountering Christ can elicit one of two responses, which the two thieves represent in Luke 23:32-43: rejection or reception.

Consider the astounding intercession of the sacrificial Savior on behalf of the unbelieving bystanders (v. 34) as he prays, “...Father, forgiven them, for they know not what they do.”

- 1 Corinthians 13:8a states that “Love never fails.” How does this relate to verse 34 and Jesus’ prayer? Read the entire “Love” passage and consider how our Savior is the embodiment of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Discuss how the church should personify God’s love to the world.
- Refer back to our study on *Kingdom Character* (Luke 6:27-36). How does Jesus embody for us the upside down character of Kingdom living even while suffering the torments of the cross?

In his commentary on *Luke*, Wheaton College president Philip Ryken points out, “Luke loved to tell his stories in twos: two women expecting a baby, two old saints waiting for the Messiah, two sisters welcoming Jesus into their home, two men going up to the temple to pray, and so on.”<sup>1</sup> In today’s passage we observe two thieves and two responses. Note the first of two reactions to encountering Christ: strong rejection. There are those who are indifferent to the gospel (v. 35), those who scoff and mock at it (vv. 36-37), and those who rail against it (v. 39).

- Both criminals made a request of Jesus (v. 39, 42). How are the requests different from one another? What attitudes typically characterize your requests to Jesus?

The second thief humbly acknowledged his own state of sinfulness and threw himself on the mercy of Jesus (vv. 41-42). Although both of the criminals shared the physical anguish of the Lord’s body as they hung upon their own crosses, only one dying thief was ever to know “the joy that was set before him” (Hebrews 12:2), receiving full acceptance from Jesus as the Savior pronounced, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (v. 43).

- The second thief acknowledged his own state of sinfulness (v. 41), but also stated that Jesus did nothing wrong. What can we conclude the thief was declaring about Jesus here? How did this declaration of his own sinfulness differ from the other thief and even the crowd?
- How was the second thief a witness to the first by his words and attitude? Think of a situation where the people you know have little hope. How can you be a witness to the love and power of Jesus? (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

As Jesus hung on the cross between two criminals, one mocked him while the other asked Jesus for mercy. The cross always leads each of us to a crossroads. We must choose which side of the cross we will be on, rejection or reception. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, “He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone.”<sup>2</sup> The cross marks the doorway into the Kingdom of God, standing at the crossroads, identifying the sacrificial Savior’s triumph over suffering, sin, and death.

- Matthew 16:24 tells us to take up our cross and follow Jesus. How can the second thief’s confession of faith help you in that endeavor?
- In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul states we are “being saved” by the power of God through the cross of Christ. The transformation of our inner lives takes place as we daily crucify our flesh and follow him. Read Galatians 5:24; 6:14 and Romans 6:5-11. How does one die daily to self in order to find new life in Christ?

DATE: April 10, 2022

SPEAKER: Wil/Aaron

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 23:32-43

## Family Dinner Table

*“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” Galatians 3:13*

Trees play a significant role in prophecy throughout Scripture. Isaiah prophesied the righteous reign of the King using the analogy of a tree: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1). And from the prophet Jeremiah: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land” (Jeremiah 23:5).

In the Garden of Eden, the first Adam succumbed to the temptation of the serpent on the Tree of Knowledge, while the second Adam overcame Satan when he was lifted up on the tree at Calvary. Of all the possible ways for a man to die, hanging on the tree was reserved for the most despicable of criminals (Deut. 21:22-23). Jesus was hung on a tree to demonstrate that the covenantal curse rested on him for our sake: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Read Psalm 22. It sounds as if David wrote it at the foot of the cross. How do the following verses point to the Luke 23 account?

- Psalm 22:1 (cf. Matthew 27:46)
- Psalm 22:7 (cf. Mark 15:29)
- Psalm 22: 14 (cf. John 19:28)
- Psalm 22:16 (Luke 23:33)
- Psalm 22:17 (Luke 23:35)
- Psalm 22:18 (cf. Matt.27:35, John 19:23-24)
- Psalm 22:31 (cf. Isaiah 53:10)

Discuss as a family what Christ endured and rejoice that “he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted” (Psalm 22:24).

### PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Widows Harvest Ministries

### PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Tsendee, supported national partner

<sup>1</sup>Ryken, Philip G. *Luke: Reformed Expository Commentary*, 2 vols., Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2009, vol. 2, 594.

<sup>2</sup>Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 92.