

Luke 23: 32- 43 Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Dear brothers and sisters; This passage tells us of the most incredible event in all of history . Here we see the results of man's rebellion and hatred (仇恨) against his God and Creator. Here we see the height of pride and arrogance of man against their promised Savior (救主) . Here we see the Son of the one true living God crucified (被钉十字架) between two criminals (罪犯) . Can you think of anything that man could do that is worse than this? No. Here we see man at his worst, being filled with hatred because he has believed the lie of Satan. Here we see the hatred of Satan against his maker through what man is doing to Jesus Christ the son of God.

So what is the Lord teaching us here in these verses? Well , we cannot trust our own interpretation, but as in all things, to know the truth we have to evaluate everything from the word of God. What is described here is a fulfillment of many prophecies (预言) . Jesus himself tells us in Luke 24:44-46 that the prophets, Moses and the psalms (诗篇) all prophesied that He would suffer and die. Jesus hanging on the cross is the work that His Father had sent him to do. There was no other way for men to be saved. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish (灭亡) but have everlasting life”.

Acts 2: 23,says that Jesus was delivered over by “the pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God”. So what is happening here is in fulfillment of Gods plan of salvation. So , as always, God is in control. God's purposes are being accomplished even though it is through the hands of godless men.

It is God who is reconciling (使和好) the world to himself through his Son. As Colossians 1:19 and 20 says “For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell. And by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross.”

This is why Jesus Christ had to be crucified, so we could be reconciled to God. This helps us understand the horrible scene of the son of God being nailed on the cross between two criminals.

So against this background, consider the word of the Lord for you from this passage under the theme from verse 42 “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom” .

There are 7 important point for you to meditate on from this passage. The first we have already seen. What is happening here is pre determined by God to complete his plan of salvation for all mankind. God is Sovereign (有主权的) and his will is perfect and good.

But now 2ndly notice how the Lord providentially (护理地) works out his plan of salvation in the life of one of his wayward children .

We see here that there are two criminals ,who were crucified, one on each side of Jesus. So they were men who must have committed terrible crimes. The worst and most painful punishment for criminals under Roman law, was death by crucifixion. Hanging on a cross between heaven and earth symbolized that you were considered so evil that neither heaven nor earth wanted you to live.

Now in Mathew 27:24 both criminals joined in with the scoffers (讥诮者) who were making fun of Jesus being the King of the Jews. But one criminal, had a change of heart . Perhaps after hearing what Jesus said in verse 34 “ Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” That gave the man hope and he believed and repented (悔改) of his sin.

But how could he be saved? He is nailed to the cross, death is just a few hours away? Who could help him?

Well here you see the wonderful provision (供应) of God in his life. He wasn't crucified the day before or the day after Jesus was. Nor was He hanging on a cross 10 meters away from Jesus so he could not hear or speak to him.

No, God had planned that Jesus would be crucified between the two criminals so they were close enough that they could hear and see each other.

This is God's doing, this is not by chance, no, this is the grace of God for this man that he should be crucified beside Jesus at the same time only a few meters away so he could talk to Jesus before he died.

In his last hours on earth, Jesus is once again proving that he is the good shepherd seeking his lost sheep. Now all the world can see that he truly is the long promised Saviour King whom God sent to pardon and forgive sinners.

So we see 2ndly how God 's in control of all the details of how he has planned to save us.

Do you see that in your life also? If you are so blessed to be raised in a Christian home and have heard how Christ died to save you, that is God's providential care for you. But if someone here is not a Christian, listen, the Lord has good news for you. There is hope for you. Jesus will pardon your sins and set you free from the power of sin and the devil if you ask him.

The fact that you are here today to hear God's word is not an accident (意外). This is God's plan for your life. This is God's grace. He has brought you here so you could hear the Holy Spirit speak to you from the word of God and is inviting you to come to him with your sins so that you can be pardoned and given a new life.

And for all who have believing parents so that you were blessed to hear what Christ did to save you and so came to faith in Him. That was God working and directing every detail of your lives. How you need to be forever thankful for his love in reaching out to you.

3. This brings us to the third truth that we can learn from this text.

God sent his only begotten son to save us, but we must believe and trust in him in order to be saved. Trusting and believing in Christ includes two things, Acknowledging 1. our sin and unworthiness (不配) and 2. God's justice (公义) and holiness (圣洁).

We see both of these in verse 41. The repentant criminal says "we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds, but this man, referring to Jesus, has done nothing wrong".

This criminal has come to see very clearly that God was just in condemning (定罪) him for his sins. And so we must come to see how just and perfect God is in condemning us for our sins.

We must hate our sin and see our unworthiness and love His justice and holiness. How do we do that? What must happen to us?

The Holy Spirit has to open our eyes to see our sinfulness and God's just judgment over us. He does that through his word. "Faith comes by the hearing of the word of God."

That's why if you do not have that understanding about yourself you really need to ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sin. Why is that necessary? The Bible tells us that by nature, we too are criminals. Every one of us. Why?

It was not just the evil Romans and the godless Jews who crucified Jesus to the cross. It was also our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. It is our arrogance. Our pride. Our selfishness. Our disobedience. And our

rebellion.

We are all guilty of Christ's suffering and death. And we cannot be saved unless our confession of sin is real. We can't fake it.

Christ paid the price of God's justice and holiness to cleanse us from our sin and make us just and holy. And he did that while we were his enemies.

4. This brings us to the fourth truth that when we have seen our sin and God's justice and have been pardoned (谅解), we must not remain silent. We must confess our faith and the joy of being pardoned publicly before all men.

As Jesus said in Mathew 10:32 :“ if you confess me before men I will confess you before my Father in heaven. But if you deny me before men I will not confess you before my father who is in heaven.”

We must speak out clearly to all men and especially to those who speak evil of Jesus Christ. Notice how this repentant criminal speaks out in verse 40 against the other criminal. “Do you not even fear God he says, since you are under the same condemnation”.

In the world today there are so many around us who dishonor Christ, or deny Him all together. This happens in our own extended families, with class mates in school, people we work with, our neighbors next door.

Many blame God for the evil things that happen in the world. The common complaint is, if God is so strong why didn't he prevent a certain evil from happening?. Why didn't he stop those terror attacks ?

Why did he not prevent that hurricane (飓风) from killing so many people? God gets the blame for the consequences of man's sin and the works of the devil. This is just one of the many means that Satan uses to confuse people and to deceive them.

That is their excuse to hate God and refuse to listen to him. And that's why it is so critically important for those who have tasted of the forgiving love of Christ to speak boldly. “Don't you fear God being under the same condemnation” he said to his fellow criminal? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

We have to realize that God would be perfectly just if He sent all of us to hell. But instead, He commands us to flee to Christ and believe and trust in him to be saved. In Christ we see God's holiness God's justice but also God's wonderful grace and love.

So we need to love our neighbors by telling them the truth about their need for Christ . We need to care for their souls. To boldly and fervently refute the lie of Satan that blames God falsely and assassinates (诋毁) His holy and righteous character.

We must speak the truth about Jesus Christ. How holy and exalted He is, and yet so loving and kind .How eager he is to forgive repentant sinners. Even criminals who are his enemies.

Revealing the truth about Christ is the glorious task we have been given as his bride, the church. We can speak from the heart of how tender and precious the love of Christ is and worthy of all honor and praise. Our testimony of who Christ is should never be a burden to us, but should be the greatest joy of our hearts!

We will be so blessed ourselves because our faithful witness of what Christ has done will be a constant refreshment and encouragement to our own souls.

5. Now the 5th truth to meditate on is the theme of our sermon in vs 42. “Jesus remember me when you

come into your kingdom”.

In verse 38 we read that there was a sign hanging above Jesus on the cross ; “this is the King of the Jews”. And this is why the soldiers were ridiculing (嘲笑) Jesus in verse 37 saying, “if you are the King of the Jews then save yourself”. Obviously they did not believe that he was a king.

So now over against all those who are standing around poking fun at Jesus being a king and not believing it, we have the testimony of this repentant sinner saying “Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom”. He is the only one who is expressing his confidence that Jesus is a King.

Notice again that he says” when you come into your kingdom” .Don’t you find this a striking confession (认信) ?

Think about this. Jesus is hanging on a cross beside him, and is about to die. He cant last much longer and he will be dead from his wounds and pain. But this criminal says ,” remember me when you come into your kingdom”. He obviously believes Jesus is going somewhere as a King .

He believes Jesus will continue to live even if he dies Or perhaps that Jesus will be resurrected (复活) . So what is happening here? Well you see that this man’s faith is for real.

Here you have an example of what Romans 10:9-13 says about a saving faith “ if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead , you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified (得以称义) , and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”.

This is why this man was saved. He really believed in a living Savior: He called on the name of the Lord, “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom”. What an incredible confession to make when Jesus is nailed to a cross beside him!.

Dear brothers and sisters , if he believed that Jesus was the King about to enter his kingdom, how much the more should we. We have the testimony of what is written in the inspired word of God that Jesus is in heaven seated as King at his Fathers right hand with all authority in heaven and on earth.

Is that obvious to all that this is what you believe about Jesus? Is it evident in how obedient you are to do his will and how eager you are to serve Him?

Is it clear to all the scoffers around you that you really believe that Jesus is Lord of all? Are we excited that Jesus Christ is your king and Lord?

How very different all of our lives would be if when we would wake up in the morning and begin each day with a prayer, my Lord and King help me to faithfully serve you today. Give me the strength that I need to do your will , not mine. Lord, here is my whole heart and mind and all my strength. Use it Lord to bring honor to you holy name so that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Dear brothers and sisters what a blessing it is to have a living shepherd king enthroned in heaven who has bought us with his own blood . He will provide for any and all your needs both now and forever”.

Psalms 72:12-13 already told us what kind of king Christ would be “He delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and needy, and saves the lives of the needy”.

You see what a king and savior he is , and proved it to this desperately needy man beside him the last moments of his life, dying on the cross.

6. Now the 6th truth to think on is in how Jesus responded to this man's prayer, "Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom". What did Jesus say to him? Look at verse 43. "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise".

Notice the first part of what he says Truly, or assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me. Is this not a wonderful response? Truly or assuredly (ESV) means, amen, meaning, it is true, it is absolutely certain, this is what will happen to you without a doubt. Jesus said this to emphasize the certainty of what he is promising.

Now, just think about this. This must have sounded so unbelievable in the ears of this criminal. Here he is a few hours or less away from his death and facing God's eternal punishment in hell, which he knows he deserves.

And now to hear this incredible good news "Today you will be with me in paradise". He was about to die! But now, no longer, instead of dying he will live for ever! And he did not have to wait a long time for this promise to be fulfilled. **Today** you will be with me in paradise!

Is there better news than that? to be with Christ in His Kingdom? What a miracle for this repentant criminal that this very day he will not die for ever, but live forever with Christ.

Is this not the best news for us as well, dear brothers and sisters. This is the goodness of the Gospel! We are living in a world that hates Jesus Christ and hates all who love Him and follow Him.

But, even if someone would kill your body today, they are not able to kill your soul. They will only hasten your departure into the Kingdom of God where Jesus is waiting for you. As a believer in Christ you will be with him in paradise no matter what happens to your body. As Jesus promised in John 11 :25 " I am the resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me though he may die, he shall live. And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die".

What a great comfort we have in life and in death as we confess in Lords Day 1 when we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. That we have his promise " truly I say to you this day you will be with me in paradise"

And then finally the 7th truth to comfort us from this passage is in vs. 43. Jesus tells this condemned criminal he was taking him that very same day with him into paradise.

Where is this paradise? Well, this is the place where all the saints who have died since the beginning of the world are presently. They are living with Jesus until Jesus comes again for the second time to make all things new.

We know from 2 Peter 3 that he will create a new heaven and a new earth. Until that time all believers who die now are in paradise. Another name for paradise after the ascension (升天) of Jesus to his throne is heaven.

It is the present kingdom of heaven where Jesus rules as King. The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 verses 1 to 3 talks about paradise as the third heaven where he went. God showed him what it was like, but he was not allowed to talk about it.

Verse 4 says that he was caught up into paradise and heard in expressible words, which man is not permitted to speak. There were such beautiful things he saw and heard which cannot be expressed. He had no words to describe it, but neither was he allowed to speak about it.

God is keeping it as a secret. It is a wonderful hope to look forward to. It is too much for our finite and yet

sinful minds to comprehend (理解) . But the word paradise already tells us something of what we can expect. Think of what it was like in paradise when there was no sin. When there was complete harmony and peace and joy in all that God had made.

Adam and Eve were at perfect peace and so were all other created creatures. Adam had complete authority over all God made. But the most wonderful part of it was their communion and fellowship with God. Adam and Eve walked and talked with God as their Father who had made all things for them to enjoy. There are still so many beautiful things that God has created that we can rejoice even now in a fallen and sinful world. But our greatest joy today is our fellowship with the Lord.

All the saints in heaven are enjoying that paradise which the Apostle Paul was very excited about. There is a perfect peace and fellowship there with so much joy and singing together with the Lord . This is the real paradise. Not a beach and palm trees, but a multitude, so great that no one can number of all the tribes and nations with a loud voice, saying Rev. 7:10, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb”.

Image, what it must have been for this repentant criminal being welcomed to this great assembly of all the saints to sing the praises of Jesus Christ the Lord . As King he won the victory over death and hell , the power of sin and Satan and all the devils. What a place this paradise is to be invited to come to. Children, yep, Is this the place you would like to go to when you die?

Jesus who is now seated on his throne of grace is inviting you to come in heaven. There is hope for all repentant criminals today who confess their sins and come to him saying “Lord, remember me now that you are in your Kingdom “.

If you say that with all your heart, then Jesus will also remember you. If you have never done so, do it now, today, and Jesus will say to you, This day you will be with me in paradise. Amen