

Why Jesus Loves the Jail Ministry

Luke 23:32-43

Jesus loves broken people and to some degree we are all broken. There is no end to His mercy or limit to His love! In our text today we see how much Jesus loves criminals. Jesus loves the jail ministry because Jesus loves those incarcerated and, according to our text today, even those on death row. He hasn't given up on them. Nor has He given up on you.

Jesus and the company of criminals. - "Now two others, who were criminals, were also being led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left" (Luke 23:32-33). The Greek word for "criminals" means, "evil-working men." Both Matthew and Mark, tell us there were "two robbers" or "thieves" who were crucified with Him. Jesus dying among criminals is not accidental (Isaiah 53:12).

Jesus and a conversation with criminals. - "One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other responded, and rebuking him, said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" (Luke 23:39-42). Matthew 27: 44 tells us that the crowd, the priests, the elders, the soldiers are mocking and jeering... "Even the robbers (plural), who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing." Apparently, one of the criminals has a change of heart!

Jesus and the commitment to a criminal. - "And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). No one in the Bible is given more explicit assurance of forgiveness and heaven from Jesus Christ as this man. And yet no one ever seemed more outwardly undeserving than this man (Titus 3:5-7).

Discussion Guide

Whose death (family, friend or national figure) has affected you most? Why?

Have you ever found yourself joining the "crowd", only later regretting it? Share your experience.

The one thief acknowledges his own state of sinfulness in verse 41, but also states that Jesus did nothing wrong. What can we conclude the thief was declaring about Jesus? How is the faith of the repentant criminal conveyed? Does the criminal have any time to accomplish any deeds for Christ? Does

the criminal have any time to share the gospel with people? Why is Jesus' promise of being with Him in paradise so amazing?

Is there anyone that you need to forgive that you have not forgiven? Do you fear God like the criminal? Do you understand your own need for Christ and the meaning of Christ's death on the cross? Are you relying on Jesus for your acceptance into the kingdom of God? What action do you need to take in light of this lesson?

Pease pray specifically for our jail ministry. Pray for the inmates as well as the deputies who guard them. Pray for Tom Trueb and Jeff McCanless and all of the men and women who are eager to return to in person Bible Studies. Pray for open doors and open hearts.