



## ***At Home Worship for Faith and Hope***

### ***Third Sunday in Lent***

March 7, 2021

*“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Luke 23:42 (NLT)*

\* Call to Worship

*Return to the Lord your God,*

***for God is gracious.***

*Confess to the Lord your God,*

***for God is merciful.***

*Repent to the Lord your God,*

***for God is slow to anger.***

*Praise the Lord your God,*

***for God abounds in steadfast love.***

*Worship the Lord your God.*

***Together, let us worship God!***

\*Song of Praise

*“O Worship the King”*

UMH 73

*(verses 1-2, 5)*

*Either Sing/Read the Song Below or Listen to a Worship Song*

Opening Prayer

*Lord, help us to realize our flaws in comparison to Your perfection, so we can more fully appreciate the sacrifice You made for us and wholeheartedly repent of our sins. Grace us with the ability to more fully believe in You and the humility to ask from the bottom of our hearts like the good criminal “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” In Jesus name.*

## NO Children's Moments This Week

### Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of gratitude with grit! Lift up with thanksgiving to God for the ways He has helped you through these difficult days.

### Sing the Doxology Together

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

### A Prayer for Lent

*Heavenly Father, help us be sensitive to Your presence in our lives; by taking time to pause for reflection and remembrance. Lord Jesus, may we use the freedom You have given us; to comfort those with burdens too heavy to bear. During this Lenten season, O God, You enlighten us to walk in truth and in love; lead us to share the blessings we receive from You. Creator God, rekindle within our hearts joy in our hearts as we approach each day. O Christ, Lent is the season to renew our lives; may Your Spirit help and guide us. Lord Jesus, You count as done to You all that we do for others; help us to love others as You love them. Christ Jesus, You are the Way, the Truth and the Life; come near to those searching for meaning in life. God of mercy, as we journey through this season of Lent, opening ourselves to Your grace, we ask that You will produce in us a true change of heart and transformation in our lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Savior, who showed us how to live and to love. Amen.*

### The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

### God's Word

Luke 23:39-43 (NLT)

*The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!*

### Introduction to New Lenten Series **"Seven Words TO the Cross"**

### Message

### **"The Word of Faith"**

Pastor Clark

*...see below or go to website to listen online*

The Lord's Supper

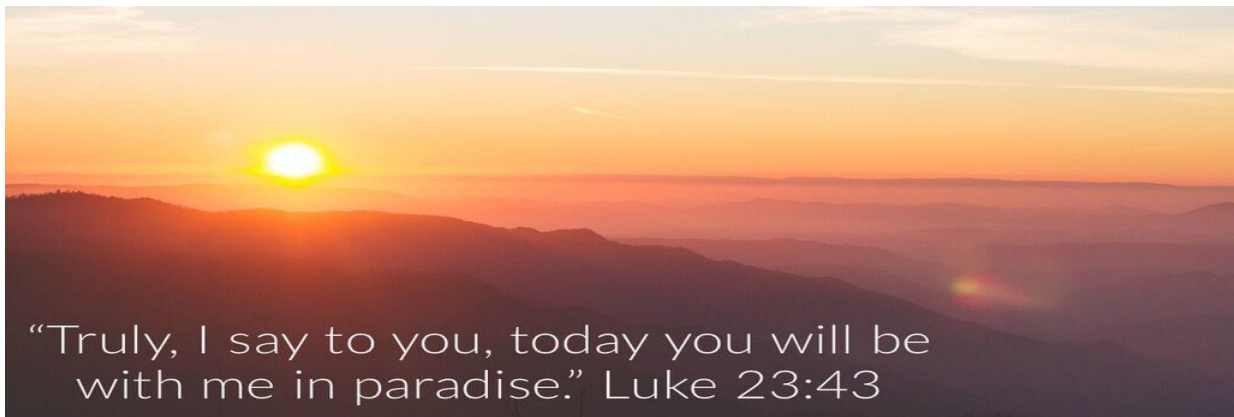
\* Hymn of Faith

*"My Faith Looks Up to Thee"*

UMH 452

Blessing

*All glory to God,  
who is able to keep you from falling away  
and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence  
without a single fault!  
All glory to the only God our Savior,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*



## **The Word of Faith**

Luke 23:39-43 (NLT)

<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, "So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it!" <sup>40</sup> But the other criminal protested, "Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die?" <sup>41</sup> We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong." <sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." <sup>43</sup> And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

### **Introduction**

Faith sometimes appears in unlikely places and in unlikely people!

For instance, we hail **C.S. Lewis** as a great apologist of the Christian faith and author of groundbreaking classics like ***Mere Christianity***, ***Surprised by Joy***, and ***The Chronicles of Narnia***. What you might not know is that he was a most unlikely person to come to faith. Lewis came reluctantly and in a most unlikely place. Lewis was a militant atheist and professor at Oxford University. He assembled in his mind all kinds of reasons he thought the Christian faith was fanciful. The last thing he wanted was to be converted. ***But God sneaks up on him***, and Lewis is "***surprised by joy***," and he says, "***I am dragged kicking and screaming--the most reluctant convert in all the world--into the Kingdom.***"

Yes, faith sometimes appears in unlikely places and in unlikely people. That is certainly true of our passage today.

Who first looked to the Cross and believed? Many we might have suggested...Apostle Peter? The beloved Apostle John? Mary Magdalene? Someone Jesus healed? No, none of these.

This thief beside Jesus on his own cross was the first person who laid claim to the cross by faith! "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.*"

It is interesting to note that earlier in the day both thieves mocked Jesus. But somewhere during the passing hours, this thief changed his mind. While the other thief kept deriding Jesus, "*So you're the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you're at it,*" this thief had a change of heart.

What moved him from scorn to belief?

Was he moved by the suffering he saw Jesus endure? Did he overhear some conversation at the cross that moved and convinced him? All those might contribute to his turning. I believe, however, it was because he witnessed something so remarkable and so unexpected in Jesus that it riveted him to soul alertness. Jesus, enduring all the scorn and hatred, yet had the audacity of self-giving love to pray: "*Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing.*"

I believe witnessing Jesus respond to such bitter and intense hatred with a humble heart to forgive is what opened this thief's eyes. True forgiveness may be a signature miracle in God's Kingdom realm.

## **#1 The Thief Came to See Himself Clearly**

We have precious little information about this thief. But what we do know is quite revealing.

*"We are getting what we deserve..."* Notice that there is no hint of justification, no hint of blaming of others, just admitting to his own guilt. What an amazing shift is taking place in this man's heart.

This is always the first step toward redemption, facing and admitting our own state.

In Jesus' eyes this thief is blessed! For it was Jesus who said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* This thief knows how spiritually impoverished he really is! He sees himself as he truly is...a sinner in need of the mercy of God.

I wonder if we do? Do I know this in my soul?

Jesus knows that no one is independently rich in spirit. Consider these reflections from Paul David Tripp:

- No one independently has his or her act together
- No one is righteous on his or her own
- No one loves as he or she should in their own strength
- No one has all the right motives
- No one's mind is independently pure

Independent spiritual riches are a delusion. This season of Lent awakens us to see this with new eyes. Like this thief, we are all spiritually bankrupt. Apart from the miracle of intervening, rescuing, forgiving, and transforming grace there are no spiritually rich people out there. None. So, the first step in a spiritual journey is seeing ourselves as we really are: poor in spirit, in need of God's rescuing mercy.

But for this thief, it does not stop there. He then is moved to pray one of the sincerest prayers ever uttered by a human being, *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."*

This is gospel faith at its purest.

Have you come to see yourself clearly? Lent compels us to come face to face with this reality. There are a lot of people in our world who live in the illusion that they are rich—and maybe they are in the things that don't matter much in God's Kingdom. There may even be people in the church who think they are rich spiritually because of their own efforts at self-righteousness. In Jesus' eyes: we are all like this thief...bankrupt in spiritual poverty, in need of the grace only God can offer.

## **#2 The Thief Came to See Jesus Clearly**

*"...but this man hasn't done anything wrong. Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."*

Max Lucado in *He Still Moves Stones*, capture this powerfully and succinctly:

*"The core of the gospel in one sentence. The essence of eternity through the mouth of a crook:*

- *I am wrong; Jesus is right.*
- *I have failed; Jesus has not.*
- *I deserve to die; Jesus deserves to live.*

*The thief knew precious little about Christ, but what he knew was precious indeed. He knew that an innocent man was dying an unjust death with no complaint on his lips. And if Jesus can do that, he just might be who he says he is."*

In a few short hours in the most unlikely place of all—a crucifixion—this thief recognizes that Jesus does not deserve this cross...that He is unjustly being crucified. But more than that. He recognizes that Jesus is freely offering Himself as a sacrifice of love. I am sure he had no grasp of what we call a theology of atonement; but he grasped Jesus was somehow part of God's larger plan.

At the heart of this, the thief has come to realize ***Jesus is the King!*** That the true realm of reality is the realm over which Jesus is Lord and King.

Notice the amazing faith this thief demonstrated. He didn't say, "***If you come into your kingdom...***" This thief says "***when you come into your Kingdom.***" This reveals the confidence he has in Jesus! His faith may be but a few hours old, but it is sincere and growing stronger by the minute!

Goes to show us: it is never too late for mercy and redemption...especially when you begin to see Jesus for who He really is. The odds makers wouldn't have given this thief but a miniscule chance for new life, but that's just what happened.

Bruce Larson had a ***neighbor*** in Sanibel Island. This neighbor was in his eighties and had been a vice-president for McGraw-Hill, one of the great publishing firms of our land. He was a brilliant businessman. He was a senior vestryman in the Episcopal church, on the city council in Sanibel, respected, and loved by all.

One weekend, he went off to a Cursillo Movement (an Emmaus Walk like event) conference with a bunch of lay people who began praying with him and talking about Jesus. This beautiful man comes home transformed and says to his neighbors and friends, "***I met Jesus.***" (Saw Jesus for who He really is)

"What happened to you?" He says, "***I don't know. I fell in love.***" One of his neighbors said: "***He's always been a good man, but now, it's clear for all to see, he's a new man.***"

So, I've got to ask, do you really see Jesus clearly? Have you met Jesus? Fallen in love with Jesus like this man? Like the thief on the cross? Or maybe it's been a long time since you really experienced Jesus personally...maybe you have been trying to live off that first encounter years ago? Is it time for a new encounter?

## ***Conclusion***

*And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

***Paradise*** refers to "*God's garden*" an image of the ***new creation***...that is the gift Jesus gives this thief!

**O Worship the King** (Verses 1-2, 5)

1. O worship the King, all glorious above,  
O gratefully sing God's power and God's love;  
our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

2. O tell of God's might, O sing of God's grace,  
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space,  
whose chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,  
and dark is God's path on the wings of the storm.

5. Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;  
thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,  
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.

**My Faith Looks Up to Thee**

1. My faith looks up to thee,  
thou Lamb of Calvary,  
Savior divine!  
Now hear me while I pray,  
take all my guilt away,  
O let me from this day  
be wholly thine!

2. May thy rich grace impart  
strength to my fainting heart,  
my zeal inspire!  
As thou hast died for me,  
O may my love to thee  
pure, warm, and changeless be,  
a living fire!

3. While life's dark maze I tread,  
and griefs around me spread,  
be thou my guide;  
bid darkness turn to day,  
wipe sorrow's tears away,

*nor let me ever stray  
from thee aside.*

*4. When ends life's transient dream,  
when death's cold, sullen stream  
shall o'er me roll;  
blest Savior, then in love,  
fear and distrust remove;  
O bear me safe above,  
a ransomed soul!*

## **A Service of Home Communion**

### **Greeting**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

### **Call to Worship**

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

### **Lord's Prayer**

Let us pray together as Jesus taught us to pray: *Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

### **Lifeline of Scripture**

Hear these portions of scripture: Jesus invites us: *"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls."* **Matthew 11:28-29**

Jesus declares: *"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me and anyone who comes to me, I will never drive away."* **John 6:35, 37**

### **Invitation to the Lord's Supper**

We invite you now to spiritually unite with all the members of Faith and Hope United Methodist Churches, and partake of the Lord's Supper.

According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.



**Sharing the Bread** This is the body of Christ, the bread of life—given for you. Amen.

**Sharing the Cup** This is the blood of Christ, the cup of salvation—shed for you. Amen.

**Prayer after Communion** Let us pray: *“We thank you, O God, that through Word and Sacrament you have given us your Son, who is the true bread from heaven and food of eternal life. We lift up to you, this day, these joys and concerns of our hearts: So strengthen us in your service that our daily living may show our thanks, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

**Parting Blessing** May the Lord bless and keep you. Amen.