

The Passion of Lent – Luke 23 Bible Study

by Rev. Dr. John C. Tittle

SCRIPTURE: Luke 23:39-43 (NRSV)

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What jumped out at you about this passage?
2. When someone remembers you—like your name, to include you, or something about what you said—*why does that mean so much to us?* What does it say about the person?
3. Theologian and pastor Karl Barth said that this scene was the first gathering of Christian community. What do you think of that observation?
4. The Greek word for deriding is *blasphemeo*. How were the first thief's words a form of blasphemy against Jesus?
5. Most people thought that God's work of salvation towards Jesus meant deliverance from death, but in actuality God was saving Jesus *through* death. How can that be?
6. Both Pilate, Herod, and now the second criminal say that Jesus was innocent. Why is Luke emphasizing this so much?
7. Luke also emphasizes in his gospel that the least of these and the "leftovers" of society (widows, gentiles, tax collectors, etc.) have the deepest insights into the significance of Christ. How do you see that at work with the good thief?
8. When the good thief asked Jesus to remember him, what do you think he meant?
9. Jesus responds to the criminal saying, "today you will be with me in paradise." What does this say about Jesus' attitude toward sinners?