

Following Jesus
Thank God for the Man on the Middle Cross
Luke 23:34-45

I. Message

a. Jesus was forgiving – v.34

- i. Definition of forgiveness – choosing not to bring up a grievance to require payment
- ii. **Hebrews 10:16-18**
- iii. Of course, this is what the cross was all about
 1. Reconciliation
 2. Forgiveness
 3. Burying our grievances against a holy God
 4. Separating them from us as far as east is from west
 5. Making the required payment for us
- iv. This was Jesus' attitude at His lowest moment humanly speaking
 1. "Don't make them pay!"
 2. "Choose not to remember this grievance!"
 3. Jesus was forgiving
 4. Everyone else is busy with lesser activities

b. The rulers were deriding – v.35

- i. Who had He "saved"?
 1. He saved the disciples from shipwreck in the storm – **Matthew 8**
 2. He saved Peter from drowning – **Matthew 14**
 3. He saved others from all kinds of illness – **Matthew 15:29-31**
 4. He saved people from demonic oppression – **Matthew 12, 17**
 5. He saved crowds from starvation – **Matthew 14 and Matthew 15**
 6. He even saved people from death! – **Matthew 9 and John 11**
 - a. And they HATED Him for these things!
 - b. They accused Jesus of being impotent, powerless
 - i. He had demonstrated His power repeatedly
 - ii. It was THEY who were powerless
 - iii. Clearly, HE had the power to save people!
- ii. So, why did He choose to not save Himself?
 1. **John 12:23-28**
 2. **John 18:36**
 3. **Matthew 26:51-54**

c. The soldiers were mocking – v.36-37

- i. There were only 2 options in response to Jesus:
 1. Pilate said He was accused of being the king of the Jews
 2. The Jewish leaders said He SAID He was the king of the Jews
 3. Herod and his soldiers dressed Him like a king to mock him

4. You had to respond in one of two ways:
 - a. Accept His sovereignty
 - b. Mock His sovereignty
 - c. Like many today, the soldiers chose to mock Him

d. The criminals were disputing – v.39-43

- i. How were they disputing or debating or conflicting?
- ii. Criminal #1
 1. Railed on Him – v.39
 2. Questioned Him – v.39
 3. Challenged Him – v.39
- iii. Criminal #2
 1. Feared God – v.40
 2. Recognized who Jesus was – v.41
 3. Asked for Jesus' help – v.42
- iv. These two men serve as a great metaphor for how sinners respond
 1. Some rail, question, challenge
 2. Others fear, recognize, and ask for help
 - a. Fearing God's judgement (understand the problem)
 - b. Recognizing who Jesus is (agree you need help)
 - c. Asking for help (trust Him alone)
 3. How have you responded like this man adjacent to, but so different than Jesus?

II. Conclusions

- a. Think about the thief on the cross
 - i. He never was baptized
 - ii. He was never discipled
 - iii. He never attended a church service
 - iv. He never even went to a Bible study
 - v. He probably didn't even know another believer
 - vi. He certainly never JOINED a church
 - vii. And yet, he made it!
 1. Why? "The man on the middle cross said I can come."
 2. That is the only answer. That is the only answer.
 3. Your ONLY credential
 4. My ONLY credential
 5. This criminal's ONLY credential is
 6. That the man on the middle cross said we could come!
 7. Imagine the gratitude he must have felt!

- b. Thank God for the Man on the Middle Cross
 - i. 2 Corinthians 9:15 “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”
 - ii. 8 specific ways to thank God for Jesus and salvation
 - 1. Colossians 1:12-14
 - a. Give thanks for the man on the middle cross
 - b. And the #1 inheritance, #2 deliverance and #3 redemption found in Him
 - 2. Colossians 3:15-17
 - a. Give thanks for the man on the middle cross
 - b. And the #4 peace and #5 unity found in Him
 - 3. Psalm 107:1-2
 - a. Give thanks for the man on the middle cross
 - b. And the #6 goodness, #7 mercy and #8 victory found in Him
 - c. May this Thanksgiving be about Jesus
 - i. But don’t just be grateful
 - ii. GIVE THANKS!