

The Crucifixion

Luke 23:26-56

For some time, the cross has become the focus point of Luke's Gospel. To understand why it is the centre of the story – even of history – we have to take a look at the man at the centre of it all.

Jesus Warns

Simon of Cyrene is press-ganged to carry Jesus' cross. Having been scourged, Jesus is too weak to carry it himself. A great crowd follows Him, mourning for Him. But Jesus tells them they are mourning the wrong person. They should mourn for themselves. He warns them of the terrible events that are coming, and that were fulfilled with the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD. The lesson for them and us, is that you cannot reject God's message of grace in Jesus and that not have consequences.

Jesus Forgives

Jesus is verbally and physically abused. Yet, He responds by praying for His enemies. When we are wrong there is an urge to get our own back. But that is not the way of Jesus.

Jesus Receives

One of the thieves realizes that Jesus is who He says He is: He is the King. The thief knows he is guilty, that he deserves his punishment, and he throws himself upon the mercy of the king. Jesus promises him that today he will be with Jesus in paradise. Not a vague promise for the never-never, but today.

That offer of life is available to anyone, like the thief, who knows their hands are empty.

But how can the God of justice allow a man like this thief into His eternal kingdom? How can any of our sins be forgiven?

Jesus dies – the innocent for the guilty

Throughout Jesus' trial, and crucifixion, Luke has told us Jesus was innocent. So if Jesus was not crucified for His own sins, why does He die the death of one cursed by God?

The events that happened at the time of his death – the sun being blotted out, and the curtain being torn in two give us a clue. The Light of the World was blotted out. The curtain was the curtain that divided the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. It was the symbol of the separation of God and man. When Jesus died it was torn in two because the separation between God and man was removed, as Jesus became the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

That is why we can be forgiven, and can enter His kingdom, because the King has died in our place.

But whilst the cross is the focal point of the gospel - it's not the end, as we will see next week!