

GENESIS

begin. belong. believe.

a story of grace... The Thief (Luke 23:32-43)

Big Idea

Jesus encounters two people while he hangs dying on a cross. One mocks him like the crowds, the other makes a request – that he would be granted paradise. This man receives grace from Jesus in his dying hour. This is a picture of both the grace of God poured out in Christ and the justice of God poured out on Christ. Grace has the ability to transform a life, even in its most desperate hour.

Questions for Discussions

1. The thief on the cross literally couldn't do anything to gain God's love, but we often think we can or have to do things to earn God's love. What are some things that you do in order to gain God's favor? What makes it difficult for us to believe that God's grace is truly free? How would our lives look different if we start to really understand this free grace?
2. One thief looked to the other thief and asked: *"Don't you fear God?" (23:40)* Knowing that he was on the cusp of meeting God face to face was a 'fearful' thing for him? What about you – do you fear God? Are you ready to meet God face to face? When God requires an account for how you lived, what will you say? Will you look back to all you did, or do you believe that it will be enough to look to all Jesus did?
3. The one thief asked for paradise and he got what he asked for? He received mercy, but mercy was not divorced from the justice of God being demonstrated in the cross of Christ. Knowing that you received mercy from God and Jesus took upon Himself for you the full weight of God's wrath (justice) – how shall this one truth shape how you relate to Jesus?
Consider Galatians 2:20-21 – "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"
4. Throughout the Encounters series we've seen that God is relentless in pursuing us, even if we're not pursuing Him. How is God pursuing you today? Are you running toward Him or away?
5. Jesus promised the 'thief' that he would be with Him in paradise that very day (23:42). To those who look to Jesus for salvation, He promises that we too will be with Him in paradise (heaven) for eternity. How does knowing that you have a home in heaven shape how you live in the here and now? In other words, how should knowing that Heaven has been secured for us because of Jesus shape how we live until we enter paradise?
6. One of the main points of the Encounters series is that people are transformed when Encountered by Jesus. What about you, how is your Encounter(s) transforming you each day? How is your Encounter(s) with Jesus impacting those around you?