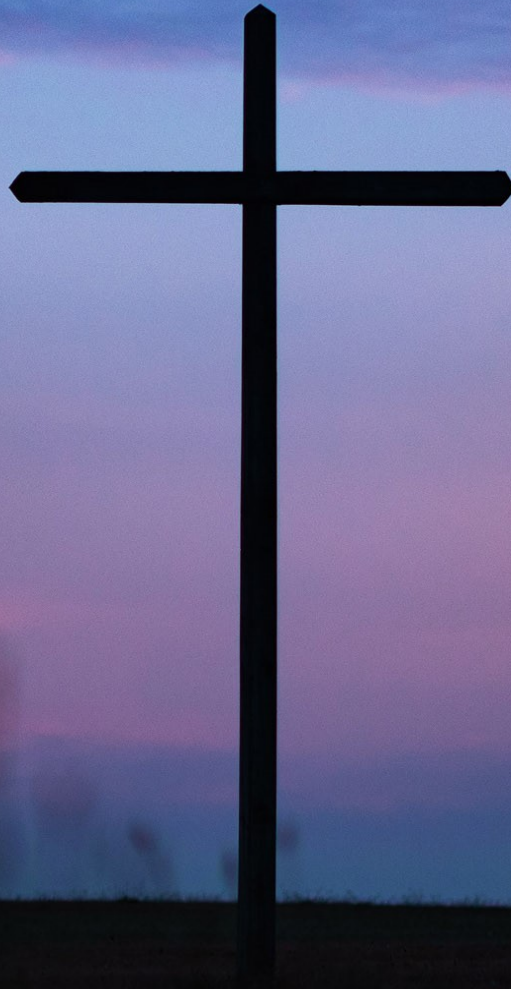


THE CROSS

FAMILY DEVOS



Father, Forgive Them

Scripture: Luke 23:32-38

Memory Verse: Luke 23:34a

“The Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’”

For My Family

Jesus had been put on trial by the Roman governors of Jerusalem, not once, not twice, but three times. In all three trials, Jesus was declared innocent. He had done nothing wrong. There was no cause or justification for His death. The Jewish leaders, however, stirred up the crowd and insisted that Jesus be crucified. Out of fear, “Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested” (Luke 23:24).

In verse 32 we read that Jesus, along with two other criminals, were led away to a place called Calvary, and there He was crucified. God Himself was nailed to a cross of wood with two criminals on either side of Him. Jesus, who had healed the lame, the blind, and the deaf; who had cast out demons, calmed storms, and miraculously fed the crowds; who had taught about loving God, our neighbor, and even our enemy, was crucified.

The crucifixion itself was a terrible act, but it was made worse through mocking and the insults. A large sign was placed above Jesus head saying, “This is the King of the Jews”. It read in three different languages so that anyone who saw it could see the supposed king in this most humiliating position and could laugh at Him. The people sneered at Him, “He saved others, let Him save Himself.”

Then Jesus looked up beyond the crowd into Heaven and spoke. He didn’t yell at the people insulting Him. He didn’t cry in sadness or shame. He looked to God the Father and said the most astonishing thing: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Do you remember what God said to Jonah about the people of Nineveh? He said that they were like children who don’t know their right hand from their left. Jesus looked at the crowd in front of Him, which was yelling vile things, laughing at His pain, and screaming abuse, and He saw children who were lost. He saw sheep without a shepherd. The people were mocking Him and He still looked down on them in love.

Sometimes people feel like they have done things that are unforgiveable. They think that there is no way that God could forgive them or love them anymore. Jesus looked at the very men who nailed His wrists and His feet to the cross, and He asked for *their* forgiveness. He *loved* the very people who killed Him. Over the next two weeks as we look at the words that Jesus spoke from the cross, we must remember that Jesus went through it all out of love so that He could bring forgiveness to us!

Questions for Young Children:

How many thieves were crucified with Jesus?

What was written on the sign above Jesus?

What did Jesus ask His Heavenly Father to do?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Do you sometimes find it hard to forgive people? Why?

What do you think you would have done if you were in Jesus' place? Would you have been able to ask God to forgive the people making fun of you?

What truth do we learn about forgiveness in this passage of Scripture?

Is there anyone who God is unable to forgive?

You will Be with Me in Paradise

Scripture: Luke 23:39:43

Memory Verse: Luke 23:43

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

For My Family

Last time, we read that Jesus had been crucified alongside two criminals, one on His left and another on His right. The crowd was mocking Jesus and laughing at His pain, but Jesus, instead of rebuking them or calling fire down from Heaven to smite them, called out to His Father, “Forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.”

Amazingly, after this act of stunning forgiveness, one of the thieves joined in with the abuse. Even though the thief was in the exact same situation as Jesus, he started to mock Jesus too, telling Him to prove He was the Messiah by getting the three of them down from the cross. Verse 39 tells us that he “blasphemed” Jesus. This shows us that the thief was not asking Jesus to save Him, but was calling Jesus a liar. He was effectively saying, “You aren’t the Savior. You can’t even save yourself, let alone us!”

The second thief defended Jesus, telling his companion that Jesus was innocent, but they deserved to be there for the things that they had done wrong. He turned to Jesus and pleaded with Him, “Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” This man feared God. He believed that not only could Jesus save, but that He could save from something even worse than death. He believed that Jesus could save for eternity. When this thief died, he wanted to be in God’s Kingdom with Jesus forever.

Jesus turned back to this man and made Him a promise: “*Assuredly* (this means it will definitely happen) I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Two men were both presented with exactly the same situation and information. One of them chose to mock Jesus and call Him a liar. The other feared God, trusted that Jesus could save Him, and humbled himself before Jesus. One of these men is standing around the throne of God worshipping Jesus right now, the other stepped out of this world into outer darkness.

You and I are like the two thieves on the cross. We have all sinned against God and need someone to save us and forgive us. We all have a choice to make: was Jesus a liar who couldn’t even save Himself, or was He Lord? Will we join the crowd and mock Him, or will we ask Him to take us into His Kingdom so that we can be with Him in Paradise?

Questions for Young Children:

What did the two thieves say to Jesus?

What did Jesus say to the second thief?

What did Jesus mean when He said “You will be with Me in Paradise?”

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Have you ever heard someone mock Jesus or His followers? What did they say?

What does the story of the thief being saved teach us about salvation?

Did the second thief do anything to deserve Heaven? Was He a good person? Why did Jesus say that this thief could go to Heaven even though he wasn't a good person?

Behold Your Son

Scripture: John 19:25-27

Memory Verse: Matthew 20:28

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

For My Family

As we continue to look at the things that Jesus said while He was on the cross, we find something quite unique that teaches us something very important about what Jesus was like.

We have already read that Jesus had been nailed to the cross, and there was a great crowd gathered around. Some were mocking Him, some were laughing at Him, and even one of the thieves next to Him was insulting Him. But there were other people there as well. John 19:25 tells us that John, one of the disciples, Jesus’ mom (Mary), His aunt (also Mary), and Mary Magdalene (can you believe *another Mary?!)* were watching all of this take place. When Jesus looked down and saw them, He said, “Woman, behold your son,” to Mary His mother, and, “Behold your mother!” to John. Jesus was telling John to take care of Mary and make sure she was provided for after He was gone.

In the middle of His crucifixion, Jesus was still thinking about and caring for others. He was in pain and exhausted, He was being mocked and laughed at, and still He was thinking about how He could love the people around Him. He already showed incredible love and grace to the soldiers who crucified Him by asking His Father to forgive them, and now when everyone was worried about Him, He was thinking about His mom, and making sure she was cared for.

This is one of the key things to remember about Jesus: He came not to be served, but to serve others. His purpose was to show God’s love and kindness to everyone around Him, and He did that right up to the very end.

God has given us families, friends, neighbors, and classmates, all of whom we can serve. So how can you serve the people around you right now? We can be obedient to our parents and obey them, and even do chores before we are told. We can prefer friends and classmates above ourselves, looking for ways to help them rather than always try to get what we want. We can be kind to our siblings and treat them the way we want to be treated.

Today, on the day that Jesus loved the world so much by dying on a cross for our sins, let’s think of some ways to show love to those who are closest to us. Let’s remember what Jesus did, and then let’s honor His sacrifice by loving our families the way He would want us to!

Questions for Young Children:

What did Jesus say to Mary and John? What did He mean when He said this?

Did Jesus come to be served or to serve others?

How did Jesus show love to the world on this day (Good Friday) 2000 years ago?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What does this passage teach us about who Jesus is?

What are some ways that we can serve others and honor Jesus today?

How was Jesus' death on the cross an act of service and love to the whole world?

Why Have You Forsaken Me?

Scripture: Matthew 27:45-51

Memory Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:21

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. “

For My Family

Jesus was exhausted. He had been whipped and beaten, carried His heavy cross to the Golgotha, and was crucified. He had been hanging on the cross for three hours. His mouth was dry from dehydration, so when He cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani,” the crowd couldn’t understand what He said. Some thought He was calling for Elijah to come down from Heaven and save Him from the cross, but that wasn’t it at all.

Jesus was not calling for Elijah, He was calling to His Father. The words that He spoke mean, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” For the first time ever, God the Father had turned His face away from God the Son. Jesus and His Father had become separated because Jesus, who had never known sin, had taken the sin of the whole world upon His shoulders. Every lie, every fight, every murder, all of the most vile and disgusting things ever done throughout history, and every horrible thing that will ever be done in the future, was placed upon Jesus. He took it from us.

In the book of Romans we read that, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” and also that, “The wages of sin is death.” We have all deliberately broken God’s law, and because of that we were separated from Him. We couldn’t be in His presence, just like Adam and Eve could no longer be in the Garden. There was a great veil that hung between mankind and God in the temple, showing that we were forever separated from Him.

Jesus had never sinned and had always been in perfect union with God the Father. When He took our sin upon Himself, He was separated from God, but something amazing happened for us. The veil tore in half from top to bottom. By taking our sin, Jesus opened the door for us. Because of what He did, we could now be with God again. God made Jesus, who never knew sin, to become sin for us, so that we might be made right and whole with God by Jesus.

Isn’t it wonderful to think that everything that we have ever done, ever said, or even ever thought that displeased God has already been forgiven on the cross? Every sin has been taken off of you and me and placed on Jesus. This is why we love Him so much. This is why He is worthy to receive our praise, our worship, our thanks, and our devotion.

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus speaks no more. We will have to turn to the Gospels of Luke and John to see the final wonderful words of Jesus from the cross.

Questions for Young Children:

Who did Jesus cry out to? Who did the crowd think He was calling for?

Was Jesus separated from the Father for His own sins, or for ours?

How many of our sins did Jesus forgive on the cross?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why do you think Jesus said, "Why have You forsaken Me?"

Read Psalm 22. How many prophecies about Jesus' death on the cross can you find? (Keep in mind, Psalm 22 was written 1000 years before Christ's death.)

What did the tearing of the veil symbolize?

It Is Finished

Scripture: John 19:28-30

Memory Verse: Ephesians 2:8-9

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

For My Family

If you were standing before God the Father and He asked you, “Why should I let you into Heaven?”, what would you say? Maybe you think God would let you into Heaven because you had been a good person, or maybe you think the good things that you had done in your life might just weigh more than the bad things. Maybe you would talk about how many times you went to church, or how you had given money to the poor, or even just how you had been good to your mom and dad. Sadly, there are many people who are trying to earn their way into Heaven by *doing right thing*, or by doing enough right things, but this is not the way.

Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us this: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” The gates of Heaven are not opened to us because of what we do, but instead because of what Jesus has already done. We *cannot* do enough good to cover up our sin. We can’t be made right with God through our own strength and work. We can only be made right because of what Jesus did.

When Jesus was on the cross, He looked down at those around Him and cried out that He was thirsty. The people had already struggled to understand Him when He cried out, “My God why have you forsaken me?,” and Jesus wanted to make sure that every single person for all eternity would be able to clearly hear the words that He was about say. The soldiers placed some sour wine on a sponge and lifted it up to Jesus’ mouth. After wetting His tongue and summoning His strength, Jesus spoke what might be the most important words ever spoken in all of history, “It is finished.” *Tetelestai*, the work is done.

Jesus had done it. He had finished the work that He came to do on earth. All of the sin of mankind had been poured out on Him instead of us, and it now it was over. It is finished. There is no more work to do. When we stand in front of the Lord and He asks us why He should let us go into Heaven, we can boldly say to Him, “Because of Jesus. He paid the price, the penalty for my sin, and I stand before You, O Lord, not according to what I have done, but because of what Your Son Jesus already did. I am clothed in His righteousness, death has no claim on me.” And do you know how God will respond to that? He will say, “Well done, My good and faithful servant, welcome into My rest!”

Questions for Young Children:

Jesus said, "It is finished." What was finished? What did He mean?

What do we have to do to go Heaven? (Nothing, simply accept the work of Jesus on our behalf)

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Does God love us because we do good things? Why does God love us?

Jesus said, "It is finished," about 2000 years ago, but people have messed up and made all kinds of terrible decisions in the last 2000 years. How do Jesus' words apply to everything that has happened after Jesus died?

How is the sacrifice that Jesus made kind of like the sacrifices that people gave of sheep and goats in the Old Testament? Why don't we make sacrifices like that anymore?

Into Your Hands

Scripture: Luke 23:44-46

Memory Verse: Revelation 7:9

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”

For My Family

The crowd that watched as Jesus was crucified thought that this was the end. Jesus had been born humbly in Bethlehem, grown up in Nazareth, preached, healed, and now He was about to die. But Jesus knew something that everyone else didn't know. Jesus knew that this was just the beginning.

The last thing we see Jesus say as He was dying on the cross is found in Luke 23. We read that Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit,” and then He breathed no more. Jesus was saying to His Father in Heaven, “Get ready everyone, I'm about to come home!” You see, Jesus knew that no matter how long we live here on earth, if the Lord gives us 10 years, or 40 years, or 70 years, or even 100 years to live, when we take our last breath here, we actually start our real, forever lives.

In 1 Peter 2:11, Peter writes to us and calls us something really interesting. He calls Christians, “Sojourners and Pilgrims.” A sojourner is someone who travels through one place to get to their real destination. A pilgrim is someone who goes on a journey with a spiritual purpose. Peter is telling us that our lives here on earth are really just us travelling until we get to our true home, our forever home in Heaven. Our lives, in many ways, are just journeys that we are going on, and at the end of that journey is Jesus.

Our memory verse today is taken from a book that shows some wonderous images of Heaven. In the book of Revelation, we read some things about what Heaven will be like. In chapter 7 we read that one thing that we will see when we get to Heaven is vast crowd of people, so many people that we can't even count them. These people will be from every country in the world. All of the different people groups and every different language will be standing together, and we will all be praising Jesus.

If you know someone who has gone to Heaven, then I want you to imagine them dressed all in white, standing in a great big group of other people, with their hands raised, singing to Jesus. All of our loved ones who have gone to Heaven before us will be there, and guess what, they are so, so happy to be there, and one day, we will be there too. One day, just like those who have gone before us, we will go and live in our forever home with all of our loved ones, and most importantly, Jesus.

Questions for Young Children:

What do you know about Heaven? What do you think it will look like? Draw a picture of what you think Heaven will be like and then share it with the family.

What is a sojourner? How is our life like a big journey? Where are we going?

How long do we get to live in Heaven?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

The Bible says that “For the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross” (Heb 12:2). What was the joy that this passage is speaking about?

Who are you excited to meet or see again in Heaven?

How does knowing that we are sojourners and pilgrims affect the way we live our lives here on earth?