

6.10.24 Communion Sunday Service

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Date: 06 October 2024

Preacher: Reverend David Strain

[0 : 00] Good morning, a warm welcome to the service this morning and those who are visiting from different areas, it's a pleasure to see you joining with us as well as we come together around the Lord's table and as we worship God.

A few notices just before we begin. First of all, just to remind you that the evening service is at 6pm and that service will be taken by David again.

We've been blessed through his ministry over the weekend and we look forward to hearing God speak through David again this evening. After the service there will be a fellowship and David will share testimony of that fellowship as usual so please be encouraged to come along to that.

I'm not going to take time to go through the notices that were on the screen beforehand, you've had the chance to look through these so you can take note of the different things. One further notice, and it gives great encouragement to say this, is that the session has been open over the weekend and there have been two who have come forward into membership this morning.

One is Katey Tuck, Katey Tuck McKinnon, who we know, who we love, most of you will have thought that Katey Tuck has long since been sitting at the table but she has lacked that assurance but God has given her that assurance even this morning.

[1 : 31] And so we are delighted to see Katey Tuck sitting with us as one of the Lord's people at the Lord's table. And also Ian McLeod who's come and he's joined with us over the last year maybe.

Ian's from Lewis, he's working over in the hotel and Ian has come forward also and professed his faith this morning. So we welcome them into the communicant membership of the congregation here and we're delighted to see them and pray God's blessing on them.

As you see the Lord's table is set and there are visitors here and any who know the Lord, who trust the Lord, who are in membership of any congregation, you are welcome to join with us.

It's not North Harris table, it's the Lord's table and please be encouraged to come forward. Let's now worship God and let us sing to his praise.

We'll sing from Psalm 100, the whole of the Psalm. Psalm 100, all people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, observe with mirth, his praise foretell, come ye before him and rejoice.

[2 : 45] Let's stand to sing to God's praise. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, Him, sir, with mirth, his praise foretell, come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed. With an authority he did us say, We are his copy, doth us be.

And for his sheep he doth us take. Oh, enter in his gates with grace, Approach with joy his courts unto.

Praise God and bless his name always. For it is simply so to you.

His mercy is forever true. His mercy is forever true.

[5 : 06] His truth at all times burning soon. And shall promise to his endure.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer.

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day. And we thank you for the privilege that we have of coming together as your people in worship.

We thank you for the people in spirit and in spirit and in truth as we gather together this morning. We thank you for the psalm that we have read and we thank you for the revelation of who you are.

[illegible]

[6 : 53] We are sinners by nature. We are sinners by practice. And we confess that sin. Even as we come to the table, we come to the table confessing that we are sinners, but that we are trusting in Jesus as our Savior.

And we thank you that as we confess our sin and as we look to Christ, we have the assurance that we are pardoned and that we are saved from our sin, that we are purified from all unrighteousness.

And we thank you that as we look to the cross, we are reminded that not only are we pardoned from our sin and our unrighteousness is taken away, but we thank you that we are made righteous in and through Jesus.

The perfect life that we see lived in this world. The life that the first Adam could not live. The last Adam, Jesus, has lived for us as our substitute.

And we thank you that as we trust in him, as we put our faith in him, we are made righteous. God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

[8 : 10] So that in him, through him, through that finished work, we can become the righteousness of God. So help us to meditate upon these things and from the joy that we feel in our hearts through the salvation that you have given us, that we would worship you from our hearts, with our lips, raising our voices to the God who alone is worthy, the God who loves us, the God who laid down his life, the good shepherd who comes to seek and to save those who are lost.

So bless us, we pray, and we pray that as we go to the table, some of us, that we would remember truly the death of Jesus and also the resurrection of Jesus, the fact that we do this only until he comes.

So we pray that we would be ready day by day, confessing our sin, trusting in Christ, and anticipating the return of Jesus, for he will make everything new.

We pray your blessing, especially on KTAC and Ian this morning. We thank you for their profession of faith. We thank you that they are coming forward to sit at the table for the first time.

We pray that they and we would know your special blessing as we come as we are called to. Pray for David. We thank you for his ministry over the weekend.

[9 : 47] We ask that he opens your word this morning, that he would know the help of the Holy Spirit, and that we, each one of us, would have our minds cleared of all that would distract us, and our hearts touched and opened to the gospel of Jesus.

We pray for those who are with us, everyone who is here, every family represented. We pray that you would bless us and help us in our particular needs in each situation. We pray for those who are absent this morning as well, some who are struggling with health, some who are struggling with advancing years, some who may be drifting from you and may not have the desire to come into the house of God.

We pray for each person. You are the God who knows us, and we ask that you would meet each one at the point of their need. Pray for our nation.

Ask that you would draw us back to yourself. We pray for those that you are allowed to be in leadership over us. Give them humility to seek the wisdom that comes from above. And we pray for all nations that in this day, as so many meet across the world, some who are persecuted, even as we remembered last evening.

We pray that you would be working with all those who meet together in the name of Jesus, that the Church of Christ will be built. So hear our prayers.

[11 : 15] Cleanse us from sin. Empty us of self. Fill us with the Holy Spirit. And lead us in worship, we pray. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Boys and girls, you're all kind of over that way this morning, so I'll just speak to you from here just now.

But I've got one thing to show you, and this is it. So do you know what this is? What is it, Henry? It's a tie.

And is there anything special about this tie? What do you think, Henry? Pardon? It's got tweed on it.

And is it any particular kind of tweed? Not sure. We turn it around. Well, where are we? We're in Harris.

What kind of tweed do you think it might be? It's Harris' tweed. So this is a tie that we got for David. So that's the other thing I can show you.

[12 : 21] I can show you David. Some of you haven't met David yet. So David is from Glasgow, and he's a minister out in America. So he still speaks with a bit of a Glasgow accent, but he says some words that sound a bit funny, a bit American.

So he's been away for 16 years, and we thought we'd give him this tie so that he can remember Scotland and he can remember Harris. And maybe when he puts this tie on in Mississippi, he will remember you guys, and he'll pray for Harris and for the boys and girls in Harris.

So there's some things that we can wear, some things that we can have, some things that we can do, and they help us to remember something, or they help us to remember someone.

Now, what do you see in the church this morning that's different from normal mornings? What do we see? Michael, help me out.

We see a table. And what's on the table? Two things on the table. Bread and wine. Yep, bread and wine.

[13 : 39] Here's the question. Who do we remember when we come to this table? Who do we remember?

And Jesus, this isn't something that the church has thought up. Jesus himself, he designed that his people would come to what is called the Lord's table and that we would take bread and that we would take wine and that we would remember his death.

So, when we come to the table, we're given something by God at a table and bread and wine so that we'll remember him, that we'll remember Jesus, that we'll remember what he did for us. he died for us.

And why did he want to take away our sin? Michael? So we could go and be with him here and then in heaven. And why do you think he wants that?

And we'll pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you love us. We thank you that when we see and when we take the bread and the wine, we remember how much you love us.

[16 : 14] So help us to know your love, to trust in you and to remember all that you've done for us.
We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you for listening.

[illegible]

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

to pray for them. And I will now hand over to David. Thank you, David. Over the course of this weekend, we have been looking at the various people who the gospel writers tell us were clustered around the cross of our Lord Jesus. On Friday evening, we thought about the soldiers who crucified him. And then last night, we considered the scoffers, the mockers who slandered him and wounded him with their words. And now this morning, I want to consider the two robbers who were crucified on either side of him. All four gospels give us the same basic facts. Jesus was crucified first. And then the two condemned criminals were crucified with him, one on each side. It was all a part of our Lord's comprehensive public humiliation. Calvin says they gave Jesus first place as though he were the thieves' leader. Interesting, Matthew and Mark tell us that once he was nailed to the cross, the passersby and the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people all mocked Jesus and so too did both criminals who were crucified along with him. But only Luke reports the fact that one of the two had a remarkable change of heart. And so it is to Luke's gospel that I want you to invite, I want to invite you now to turn with me. I'm going to linger over the exchange between the dying thief. We just sang about him. Between the dying thief and his dying

Lord. An exchange that has ever since been rightly, immensely precious to every sinner saved by grace. So take your Bibles in hand, please, and turn to Luke chapter 23, verses 32 through 43. Before we read the passage, let me highlight three things I want you to be looking out for as we read through God's word. First of all, I want you to pay attention to the contrast between the two men who were crucified beside the Lord Jesus. It's a contrast that actually will show us why faith matters so very much.

[23 : 28] So the contrast, why faith matters. And then I want you to listen for a confession. A confession of faith on the lips of one of these two men that will show us what faith believes. So a contrast that shows us why faith matters. And then a confession that tells us what it is that faith believes. And then finally, I want you to listen for a commitment not made by either thief, but a commitment made by the Lord Jesus Christ himself to the dying thief who professes Christ himself to the dying thief who professes his faith in his Savior. Here is what faith receives. Okay, so a contrast, why faith matters, a confession, what it is that faith believes, and a commitment, what faith receives.

That's where we're going this morning. Before we read God's word together, let's bow our heads and ask him to help us understand his word. Let us pray. Our Father, we pray now, we plead with you now, that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, would come upon us and shine into our sin-benighted hearts, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, even from this portion of your Holy Word, and chase away the darkness of our unbelief, the shade of our sin, that in the bright light of our Savior's redeeming love, we might receive and rest upon him as he has offered to us in the gospel.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. Luke 23, at verse 32, this is the word of God.

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him, Jesus, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they cast lots to divide his garments, and the people stood by, watching.

[26 : 48] But the rulers scoffed at him, saying, He saved others. Let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his chosen one. The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, saying, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.

There was also an inscription over him. This is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, Are you not the Christ?

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, justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong.

And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. and he said to him, truly, I say to you, today, you will be with me in paradise.

[28 : 21] Amen. And we praise God that he has spoken in his holy word. All right, let's think about the contrast here. First of all, here's why faith matters.

The contrast, why faith matters. Consider for a moment the situation of these two men. I suppose they are as alike in background as any two men ever could be.

Matthew calls them robbers. the word we saw this the other night. The word could mean revolutionary. Somebody trying to incite sedition against their Roman oppressors.

But here, Luke simply calls them criminals. The word refers to an evildoer, an habitual crook, a hardened thug.

So, whatever the precise nature of their crimes, whether it was petty theft, or violent insurrection, the point is, these two, these are bad men.

[29 : 40] One of them, frankly, acknowledges that fact, doesn't he, in verse 41? Do you see that? He says, we are being executed justly. He acknowledges, this is what we deserve, for the lives that we've lived.

So, they are alike in their background. They're also alike in their present circumstances in this moment as we meet them here in the gospel, aren't they? They both receive the same sentence.

They both experience the same indignities and agonies at the hands of their killers. others. And they both have access to the same information about the third man who was being crucified between them.

What they understood about Jesus before this moment, we really have no way to know. But on this day, as they hung there beside him, they certainly heard all his central claims, clearly enough, although those claims were now being hurled back at Jesus as accusations and insults by his enemies.

They heard in those accusations that Jesus claims he is the king of the Jews. They heard that he saves others, that he is the Christ, the son of God, the chosen one.

[31 : 14] And as they look over at Jesus' cross, they both saw the same things, didn't they? All they could see was a king, as Ralph Davis puts it, wearing a crown of thorns, whose throne is a cross, whose robe is nakedness, whose glory is a body shredded by Roman whips, whose court consists of caustic blasphemers, and whose enemies have apparently conquered him.

In other words, they look over at Jesus and they don't see much of a king at all. And as they take all of that in, so they're alike in background, they're alike in present circumstances, they're alike in the information that they have about Jesus, and as they take it all in, they're also alike in their initial reaction to Jesus.

Matthew and Mark's gospel both tell us those, plural, who were crucified with him also reviled him.

So they both took up the taunts, and the mockery, and the jeers, and the insults. Now consider, just for a moment, what that would have required of them.

Hanging on the cross, nailed to the tree. They would have had to haul themselves up by the nails that were driven into their hands, pushed down on the nails, driven through their feet, searing agony, all in an effort just to fill their lungs with enough air to raise their voices and spend that precious breath, one of their last in this world, hurling insults at Jesus.

[33 : 07] even in the face of their own imminent death, their hearts are both full of nothing but bitterness and anger toward Jesus Christ.

The words of the one that Luke does record, we can be sure, are a sample of the sentiments of them both, at least initially. He said, do you notice in the text, Christ?

Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us. These are not sincere words. These are words dripping with sarcasm and hatred.

What a cruel twist of the knife to crucify a failed Messiah next to us. This isn't the Christ. And he can no more save us than he can save himself.

That's really what this criminal was saying. But then, very soon it seems, these insults fade from the lips of one of the two criminals, even while the other one carries on oblivious.

[34 : 20] The heart of one of them is changed toward Jesus Christ, while the other one continues screaming out his vitriol along with his pain. Both of them are dying.

Both of them are confronted with Christ. Both of them see the same sights and hear the same sounds. But while the last few hours of the life of one is consumed with hatred and bitterness, the other receives from Jesus the assurance that today he will be in paradise.

God is and our question needs to be as we take all of that in, our question needs to be what's the difference between them? What has made the difference between them? What is it that compelled Jesus to make this promise to one and not to the other?

Think about it, they're both naked, they have no riches to give Jesus, things, they can't buy their way to heaven, their hands and feet are nailed to the cross, so there's no work they could do, no possibility now of any good deeds that would win the approval of Jesus, they're both, at this moment, they're both now entirely out of excuses, they're out of options, So what is it that can take such an unlikely prospect, an imperfect, weak and fallen man, a perfect specimen of sin and failure as this dying thief certainly was?

What can take him and secure for him the certainty of paradise? Nothing. Nothing. Nothing but faith in Jesus Christ crucified.

[36 : 20] The only discernible difference, the only difference between these two criminals is that one of them believed and was saved.

There are some complicated passages in the Bible. And it's easy to misunderstand them or twist their meaning. But there's no possible way to misconstrue the message of this story.

And somehow conclude as you read it that Jesus assured this dying thief of paradise because of some quality of the thief's, some work that the thief had done that compelled Jesus to be so gracious to him.

That's not an option available to us. That's simply, there's no way to read the text that way. It's unmistakable here, isn't it? What saved this man?

Only faith. Empty. Unworthy. The faith not of a mighty, sinless doer, but the faith of a helpless, bankrupt sinner who can do nothing.

[37 : 45] He can do nothing except plead for mercy. And that is what drew from Jesus the promise that he would be saved.

My wife's maiden name is MacLennan. The Latin motto of the MacLennans is dumb, spiro, sparrow. While I breathe, I hope.

It's part of the lesson of this last minute, 11th hour conversion right here, surely. What good news it is. While you draw breath, there's yet time for you to find mercy from Jesus Christ.

Maybe you've lived a long and selfish life. You've filled your days with greed and pride. You've been harsh and bitter. You've been lazy and entitled.

You've made a God of your wealth or your lusts or your family or your career or your reputation.

[38 : 54] Maybe there's a trail of broken relationships and moral failures and squandered privileges littering your path. And now, maybe here, you're facing your remaining years.

Perhaps you've begun to wonder if it's too late for you. Let the dying thief preach gospel hope to you.

Dumb, spiro, sparrow. He says, There's hope for you yet. There is. While you still breathe, you can make the same discovery that he did.

Even now, this late hour. Do you see from the example of this dying thief that you can no more earn Christ's welcome of you than he?

All those years ago, your hands and feet, they're not bound as his were. But do you realize that you are today just as powerless to save yourself as he was?

[40 : 05] hanging there, immobilized by Roman nails. Amidst all his helplessness and his unworthiness, he understood that while his works, his own deeds, could certainly damn him forever, there were no deeds of his that could ever save him.

And then he saw the man dying beside him. Jesus the Christ. And he understood he can save me.

Only he can save me. He can save me to the uttermost. I wonder if you can see yourself in this crucified thief.

Well, if you can, friend, right now, right now, where you're sitting, no more delay while there's still hope before the window closes.

Would you follow in his steps and put your trust in Jesus? Dumb Sparrow, Sparrow, there's hope for you yet. There is, right now, today, right here.

[41 : 22] There's wonderful hope in Jesus. Or maybe you're reading the story of God's mercy to a man in the final moments of his life and you're wondering if perhaps you can purposefully delay your repentance.

I'll go indulge my appetite, sin with impunity, delay my repentance until the eleventh hour. This was an eleventh hour conversion after all, so maybe I can wait to the very last moment to get serious about Jesus.

And then, just before the end, like the dying thief, I'll quickly repent. And that way, I'll have the best of both worlds. All the pleasures of sin in this life and all the pleasures of heaven in the next.

What a wicked and not to mention terribly precarious scheme that is. After all, there's no guarantee for any of us, as we heard in Mary's testimony last night, there's no guarantee for any of us that we will ever know when our end approaches.

Turn on the TV news and every night you have a parade of reminders, don't you? that life is short and calamity strikes sometimes without warning.

[42 : 46] Now, we need to remember that our souls may be required of us at any moment. And so, really, the lesson of the repenting thief is not that we can just wait to repent until the last possible moment.

That's not the message. The real message is whenever you are presented with Christ crucified, you should respond then and there.

Not with some grand gesture, not with some extravagant gift, but like he did with repentance and faith before it's too late.

it was Spurgeon, I think, who once said that there is only one deathbed conversion in the Bible. Here it is. There is one that we might never lose hope, but there's only one that we might never presume upon God's grace.

So, there's a contrast here. Do you see it? Kind of striking contrast that shows us why faith matters. It's urgent. It's the only thing that saves.

[44 : 03] Then secondly, notice there is a confession here that shows us what it is that faith believes. Faith matters, but faith in what? Precisely.

Well, look at the confession that the dying thief makes. First, he sees himself with the eyes of faith.

And, you know, whenever real saving faith springs up in a human heart, it's always accompanied with conviction of sin and by true repentance.

The other criminal, he's condemning Jesus. He's hurling his insults at Jesus. There's no sense of remorse in him at all. There's no ownership of his sin.

There's just anger at everybody else. But look at verse 40. The other criminal rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

[45 : 06] And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. He confesses, frankly, that his deeds deserve everything that he gets, including the cursed death signified by the cross.

He agrees with God in God's condemnation of his own sin. Everybody else is denouncing Jesus. This man denounces himself.

You know, you can't trust Christ without denouncing yourself. Did you know that? You can't have Jesus and not turn from self.

We're so often like the little child who reaches through the narrow fence to steal his neighbor's toy. And while he holds onto the toy, he can't pull his hand back through the bars.

And now he's stuck. He can have his illicit treasure and be imprisoned. Or he can let it go and be free.

[46 : 18] But he can't have both. One thief won't repent. Oh, to be sure, he would take salvation from Jesus if Jesus was offering it.

are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us. But he's stuck. He'd quite like to be saved, certainly. But he was not willing to let go of his self-righteousness and agree with God that he's guilty and condemned.

Now, wait a minute, you're saying. What possible basis can this unrepentant thief have for self-righteousness? I mean, look at him. He's the lowest of the low.

Stripped naked, bleeding out, dying as a despised and well-known criminal in the community. The scum of the earth.

What's he got to be self-righteous about? But actually, I think that's part of the point. Even he blames everybody else and acquits himself, doesn't he?

[47 : 27] That's what we're like. That's what the human heart does. Even in the least and the worst, we acquit ourselves in the courtroom of our own minds, at least.

But this other thief, the repentant thief, he knows better now. He knows better now. He owns his sin with no pretense, no art.

Faith repents when it looks itself. I wonder if you've reached that point yet. No more self-defense.

No more passing blame. No more excuses. No more excuses. I'm guilty. I'm guilty.

I need mercy. Faith repents when it looks at self. are you repenting? But then notice what faith sees when it looks away from self to Jesus.

[48 : 33] the dying thief clearly knows Jesus is not like him or like his colleague in crime here. Verse 41. This man has done nothing wrong.

Christ's innocence, his righteousness can't be hidden, not even under all the blood and shame and degradation of the cross. It's actually quite remarkable when you think about it, that the faith of this dying crook saw in Jesus that this man would see in Jesus what nobody else at this scene perceived.

Everybody else saw just another naked dying victim worthy of scorn maybe. A few well-aimed barbs thrown at Jesus but not worth much more.

But this man dying beside him sees the truth. Somehow he saw that Jesus was holy, harmless and undefiled and separate from sinners. He is the one who knew no sin, tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin.

He has done nothing wrong, he says. He is Jesus Christ, the righteous, innocent, dying among thieves, as if he were a thief himself, among sinners, as if he were a sinner.

[49 : 58] What's going on? Christ suffered once for sin, the righteous for, the unrighteous to bring us to God.

That's what's going on. God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That's what's going on. the great exchange, the great substitution, Jesus bearing the wrath of God.

This dying thief deserves. Jesus takes it. You deserve, I deserve. Jesus takes it. That we might know God's mercy.

So he knows he's a sinner and he knows Jesus is righteous. More than that, he knows Jesus is king. Do you see that in the text? Verse 42, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[51 : 05] Jesus has a kingdom. He really is who the mocking crowds say he is. He is the Christ of God, the chosen one.

And as the other dying thieves suggested, although in cruel sarcasm, Jesus the king really can save. He really can. Somehow, this dying thief knows that Jesus' death is not the end of his kingship, but its foundation.

The cross of Christ doesn't spell the downfall of a failed Messiah's kingdom. It signals the establishment of his redemptive kingdom that will spread through every tribe and language and nation.

The kingdom into which this man asks now to be brought, he understands, somehow he understands, it lies on the other side of Calvary, beyond the grave.

the cross is the means of this man's salvation, not the barrier to it. And vitally, you'll notice, as he takes all of this in, you see, he doesn't ask Jesus to remember his behavior, his work.

[52 : 31] He doesn't even ask Jesus to remember his words. What does he ask Jesus to remember? He asks Jesus to remember his person.

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. He's not cutting a deal, in other words. He's not striking a bargain with Jesus.

I've got this to offer you. And in exchange, will you save me? That's not what he says. He's got nothing to offer. Instead, he throws himself, he abandons himself to Jesus, and he's asking for extravagant, undeserved grace, pure, unalloyed, unmixed mercy.

That's what faith believes. And it's not actually an extreme example, an unusual case. This is the faith by which every single sinner who ever was saved, was saved.

My faith, your faith, looks at self, and recoils in shame, and confesses, and repents.

[53 : 54] and then looks away from self to Jesus and rests. I look at myself and I repent, and I look at my Savior and I rest.

I can't save me, but he can save me. He can save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

He can save you. He can save you. So there's a contrast, there's a confession, thirdly and finally, there's also a commitment here, made by Christ to this dying thief.

Here's what faith receives, what it obtains, what it gets from Jesus. Look at our Savior's response. every single word is full of gospel significance.

Today, I say to you, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. Let's just break it down very quickly and see something of its beauty and its glory.

[55 : 10] First, he offers the dying thief certainty, certainty. Not ambiguity, certainty. Truly, I say to you, the word is amen.

Amen, I say to you. This promise of mine, he's saying, has the character of a sacred oath, a holy pledge, on which you can depend entirely.

The word spoken by the chief priests and the crowds and the other criminals, they were full of hate and lies. But my voice, Jesus says, my voice only speaks truth.

Truly, I say to you, when faith trusts in Jesus, the salvation he promises is not in any doubt.

There is no ambiguity. There's no maybe. There's no perhaps. in the gospel. As a pastor, David would say the same, I'm sure, over the years.

[56 : 21] I've counseled people who doubt their own salvation. The sight of their own sin is so real and so clear and so overwhelming to their conscience, they cannot believe that Jesus would or could or has saved them.

die. But the truth is, our sins are no worse than this dying criminals. And the assurance that he met that came to his fragile faith, that same assurance will meet ours too.

Truly, I say to you, for sure, no question, no doubt, no hesitation, no qualification, I am dying to give sinners, to give you life, pardon, and entry to my kingdom.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the cast iron guarantee of Scripture. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will you will be saved.

Truly, you will be with me. So, listen, doubting brother or sister, you are not a special case.

[57 : 50] You are not the one unique sinner who is somehow beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. You can go to him.

the thief makes it clear. If he can go, you can go. Trust him to save you. He promises he will.

There's certainty here. There's also authority here. Truly, I say to you, this is not second-hand assurance. It's not a mere deduction or an inference or a fond wish or a desperate hope.

It is the word of Jesus Christ himself spoken in the very act of securing the thing he promises to give. Truly, I say to you, to doubt your salvation in the face of these words is to make Jesus out to be a liar.

I'm giving this to you and shedding my blood for you. how dare you not trust me and believe that all that I have done will be yours now and forever.

- [59 : 07] I give you my word, he says. There's certainty resting on his own authority. And thirdly, and wonderfully, there's mercy. Certainty, authority, mercy.
- Truly, I say to you, not to the chief priests, the religious elite, the great and the good of society.
- No, to you, to you, of all people, a wretched gangster with blood on your hands. You deserve, you don't just deserve the cross, you deserve the hell of God's judgment forever.
- and I make you this promise of salvation and for you, I shed my blood.
- In your room instead, I obey and bleed and die. If his mercy is wide enough for the thief on the cross, it is wide enough for you.
- [60 : 15] There is no sin in you so grim that it cannot meet with wonderful mercy in Jesus.
- Certainty, authority, mercy, and fourthly, faith meets with immediacy. Truly, I say to you, today, you will be with me.
- He doesn't say, truly, I say to you, if you pass one more test, you can be with me. He doesn't say, I say to you, if you pay for your remaining sin in purgatory for a while, you can be with me.
- He doesn't say, once you've proven yourself, you will be with me. He says, today, you will be with me, without any delay, with nothing intervening, nothing further required, now, today, with me.
- He sometimes sing, I'm sure, oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood to every believer, the promise of God, the vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus, forgiveness receives.
- [61 : 39] Certainty, authority, mercy, immediacy, and then to crown it all, faith receives in the promise of Christ, the assurance of a glorious destiny. Truly, I say to you today, you will be with me where?
- In paradise. In paradise, the word is used twice elsewhere in the New Testament, Revelation 2, 7, Jesus promises to those who overcome to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.
- 2 Corinthians 12, 3, Paul was caught up to the third heaven, to the paradise of God, to hear things that cannot be told. He's talking about what we call heaven, isn't he? Paradise.
- But you know, I'm sure, that paradise is only paradise because of what comes before it in the promise of verse 43.
- Look at it again. What makes paradise paradise? What makes heaven heaven? truly, I say to you, today, you will be with me.
- [62 : 50] With me. That's what makes heaven heaven. The lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land.
- The thing that makes heaven heaven is the beauty and loveliness of our Savior's smile. And that's what Jesus is promising.
- The dying thief. Right then and right there. With Jesus, not beside him, not just close to him, but with him, joined to him, united to Christ by faith alone forever.
- isn't it amazing that in all the agony of his final moments hanging there on the cross beside Jesus, somehow in all of it, he gets all ready to taste what Jesus' promise signifies with me.
- Something of heaven's fellowship with the Lamb of glory burst into his dying heart, even here, in this side of eternity.

[64 : 20] The dying thief's confession of faith in Jesus was, it was remarkable, wasn't it? Remarkable. He saw in Jesus what everybody else missed, and that's pretty amazing. But that's not the most remarkable part of this story, not by a long shot.

It is Jesus' commitment to him in response that's the truly wonderful thing. You see how comprehensive, how complete the salvation Jesus dies to provide us really is.

It comes with certainty, it rests on his own authority, it drips with mercy, and it breaks into the believer's heart with immediacy, and it guarantees a bright, glorious destiny forever with the Lord.

Who would not want a salvation like that? What possible logic can you offer to justify saying, no, no thanks, grace?

I prefer my sin to your wonderful love and grace. Would you trust in Jesus today and take from his nail-pierced hands the mercy he offers you?

[65 : 39] No more delay, no more excuses. Time may be shorter than you think, sake. So may the Lord help us all to sing from this moment on with joyful hearts.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, and there have I, as vile as he, washed all my sins away.

Let's pray together. Amen. Lord, our God, we confess to you that we can be so absorbed with the day-to-day, with the ups and downs of life, with its many challenges, and we can be so proud and so defensive, so prone to justifying ourselves and blaming everybody else.

all of that is roiling away in our hearts, and we forget that we are really no different than the dying thief, helpless, and in desperate need of mercy.

And so now today, we come back to you, and we ask, we pray the same prayer, that the dying thief prayed, Lord Jesus, having entered your glorious kingdom, remember us in mercy, deliver us, save us.

[67 : 35] We want to be with you forever. forever. Would you do that please? By the mighty work of your spirit, in Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. We are going to sing, as we begin now to prepare to come to the table of the Lord, we're going to sing the Gaelic Psalm number 130, Psalm 130.

We're going to stay seated as we sing, stanzas 5 through 8, Psalm 130, I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in his word.

More than they that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord. I say, more than they that do watch the morning light to see, let Israel hope in the Lord, for with him mercies be, and plenteous redemption is ever found with him.

And from all his iniquities he, Israel, shall redeem. We'll remain seated as we sing. Amen. Thank you.

[69 : 12] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[72 : 24] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

The scene of these two thieves on the cross, the two robbers crucified on either side of Jesus. First of all, there is a word here, we've heard it already, for those who have not yet come to Christ.

You were perhaps raised in the church, certainly in a community that has been saturated with an awareness of the Christian gospel. You know the rudiments of the gospel story, at least.

You've heard perhaps a thousand sermons in your time. And maybe you've even felt the pull and conviction of the Holy Spirit working on your conscience. And still, you have not surrendered to Christ.

Not yet, you keep saying. Someday, at the last minute, after I've enjoyed my sin and lived my life, then maybe I'll follow Jesus. But you do not know if today will be your last day.

[73 : 30] You don't know if this will be the last sermon you'll ever hear. For all you know, you're in the very same situation that the man hanging next to Jesus was in, facing his last chance.

To turn from his sin and trust in his Savior. It is a mistake to read the story of the repenting thief and conclude that a deathbed conversion was good enough for Jesus and it'll do for me.

The fatal flaw, of course, in that logic, is the presumption that today will not be your last. The real lesson of the story is to take Jesus whenever he comes to you.

If you meet him in your last moments, don't let him pass by. And if you meet him today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.

If you feel the pull of his invitation to come, come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If you hear his invitation, take the opportunity and come.

[74 : 41] We saw the contrast between these two men. One saw in his encounter with Jesus his last chance. And he took it. He met Christ and trusted him.

The other met Christ and rejected him and turned from him and joined the scoffers and mocked him. As we come to the Lord's table, that contrast will be represented once again.

There are those who come to Christ and come to his table. And there are those who do not know him, who will not follow him, who refuse his call, resist his mercy, and do not come.

Let me plead with you as you see the contrast, not to let it stand. The same Christ who died between these two thieves is here right now by the Holy Spirit to meet with you.

And he calls you to come and trust in him. So that the separation that we get a little glimpse of between those who gather at the table of the Lord and those who do not, so that that separation does not become an everlasting separation for you.

[76 : 02] Secondly, there is a word of assurance and comfort for all who come to the table of the Lord seeking fellowship with Jesus Christ.

You may have walked with the Lord for decades and still, when you come to the table or you come to the cross, you come crying out all over again like the dying thief for mercy.

You don't come because you're good or wise or holier than other people. Sometimes the folks who sit at the Lord's table are called hypocrites by those who resist the call of the gospel or reject it.

But you and I, we both know it's precisely because we are hypocrites that we come to the Lord's table and seek for his mercy. This is a table spread by Christ.

Groaning under the weight of a banquet of grace. For hypocrites and failures who love him.

[77 : 19] Fail him. Yet trust him. And hate our sin. So that we say with the Apostle Paul, the good that I want to do, I do not do.

But rather the evil that I do not want to do, that I do. Who can save me from this body of death? And we say with the Apostle Paul, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He can save me. You feel unworthy. I do not deserve to come to the table. That is what you say. And you are quite right.

I am not worthy. Worthiness has nothing to do with it. Worthiness has nothing to do with it. This is not a table for the qualified.

Or the worthy. Or the deserving. Do you think the dying thief was worthy? Or qualified? Or deserving?

[78 : 23] He would have been welcome here. This is a table for sinners. Who trust in Jesus to save them. For thieves and robbers and liars and hypocrites.

Like me. And you. Who know in their bones. That they desperately need what Jesus died to give them.

That is what the table offers. Mercy on mercy. Upon mercy. Remember who he was speaking to when Jesus said, Today you will be with me in paradise.

Not to a theologian or a minister. Not to an elder or a deacon. And he wasn't offering a reward for someone who had earned Jesus' favor. By his lifelong goodness.

His philanthropy. His piety. His moral consistency. It was a terrible criminal. The lowest of the low. The scum of the earth. And when he trusted Jesus.

[79 : 26] To him the promise came. Today you will be with me. And that is what Jesus is saying to you today. As you trust him and come to the table. And eat the bread.

And drink the cup. He is saying. Today. You are with me. And I am with you.

We will be together. Always. And I will never leave you. Or forsake you. With me. Forever. Let's pray.

Our God and Father. As we bow before you. We pray for grace. Not to qualify.

To come to Christ. Or come to the table. We pray for grace. To cleanse. And pardon. And forgive. There is.

[80 : 27] No one worthy. We bless you. That all the worthiness. Is Christ's. And he gives it as a gift.

To believing sinners. To dying thieves. Help us now like him. That dying thief. To cling to Christ.

And eat and drink. The blessing of heaven. For the welfare of our souls. For we ask it in Jesus name.

Amen. As we prepare to come to the table. We are going to sing. To God's praise and glory. Mission praise number 755. When I survey.

The wondrous cross.

[81 : 27] When I survey the wondrous cross On which the winds of glory died My riches give thy crown but lost And bore contempt on all my pride Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the death of Christ my God All love and faith that charm me most

I've sacrificed them to his blood He from his head, his hands held sweet Sorrow and love, no make no doubt Did e'er such love and sorrow be For barns of gold so rich a crown Where the forel of nature lie But where an offering far to small Love so amazing, so divine

Demands my soul, my life, my own Well, that's better Well, that's better Well, that's better Well, that's better Well, that's better Well, that's better Well, that's better Well, that's better Well, that's better