

# John 23:27-42

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you sit and do turn, if you go, to Luke 23. Luke 23. And we're looking at the passage of James Redwits. and verses 26 and 49.

So we've been following the long story of Luke's Gospel to the Cross. And now we've reached the climax. And the Cross has always been the focus.

Simply because the Cross is the means by which God has brought salvation to our lost world. If you came here, hopefully you would go through our church life.

And the question that you would have at the end of our church life is why do they keep banging on about the Cross? Why do they keep talking about the Cross? Why do they sing about the Cross?

Why do they pray about the Cross? Well, because God has brought his salvation to our lost world. And Luke's great theme is rescue. That's what we've seen. That is his major interest in the Gospel.

Rescue for the world is available.

[ 1 : 03 ] Now Luke was not a Gentile. He was a Jew. But he was a doctor. He was a physician. Dr. Luke. And he was one of the travelling group of missionaries, really, that the Apostle Paul took on his journeys.

So it's hardly surprising when you come to Luke's Gospel. But Luke's Gospel is always focusing on outsiders. Outsiders being brought into God's kingdom by this great rescue mission of Jesus Christ. And it climaxes here at the Cross. This is the King of the Jews. Yes, but not the Jews only. He is the King of all.

To those who will turn to him. And trust him. And now Luke's Gospel, in many ways, is the most wide-ranging of the Gospels. The theme is rescue.

And it is universal. It is worldwide. He is the global saviour. Luke 19. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. And if we were to do a survey of Luke's Gospel, and we go through it this morning, we would see whom Jesus has come to rescue.

[ 2 : 12 ] They are the lost, aren't they? They are the tax collectors and sinners. So right at the start of the Gospel, you have the shepherds. Right at the bottom of the social pile. But it is to them that the choirs of angels appear.

To you is born a saviour who is Christ the Lord. And Luke has a great interest in women. Women who came to faith, like Anna. In the temple at the beginning of his life.

Women like Martha and Mary, sitting at his feet. Listening. They wouldn't have done that to any other rabbi. They wouldn't have been allowed to.

And yet they did it to Jesus. And Luke tells us about the many women who followed him. And we will see that again at the tomb. He is interested in Gentiles. Like the centurion in chapter 7.

Whose faith was greater than the faith of anyone in Israel. And he is interested in this centurion. In this passage. Who confesses Jesus as the righteous one.

[ 3 : 10 ] He was interested in Samaritans. Who the Jews would have no dealings with. Luke tells us the parable of the good Samaritan. Nobody else does. It's Luke who tells us about the ten lepers.

That were healed. And one gave thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So when we come to the dying thief. Who finds salvation. Right at the end of his life. And the centurion who declares Jesus to be righteous.

Both of them who are outsiders to Jewish religion. Well it's just the culmination of one of the great thieves. And so we have this last great picture.

Of the cross. And it's a wide canvas with all of life there. With people from all sorts of backgrounds. Whose lives are transformed.

By their encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. So just look down. Look at the verses. Look at verse 26. There's Simon of Cyrene. Verse 28. The daughters of Jerusalem are there.

[ 4 : 12 ] The two criminals are there. From verse 32 onwards. There are the rulers. Verse 35. Who scoff and sneer. There are the soldiers. Verse 36. There is the centurion. Verse 47.

There is the crowd. In verse 48. And his acquaintances. And the women from Galilee. Verse 49. So it's no wonder is it. That Luke says in verse 27.

There followed him a great multitude. And it's this great canvas of human life. This congregation. In relationship to Jesus. That is the focus of this section.

They've all got their place in the story. Their lives are defined. By their reaction to Jesus and his cross. And Jesus is now centre stage.

Last time we saw him. Really in the wings. As you look at the start of chapter 23. In the trial before Pilate and Herod. He almost says nothing. He's always. Almost unnoticed.

[ 5 : 12 ] But now the cross of Jesus is centre stage. And it's as though Luke's camera. Plays on this wide variety of attitudes and responses. To the most climactic day in history.

And the event. How is it described? It's described in just a few words. Look at verse 33. There. There. They crucified him. Do you see?

Where is Luke's focus? Luke's focus is not on the physical horrors. Of crucifixion. Luke's focus is on the spiritual consequences. So I want to try and gather this together.

What are the consequences? Of the death of the son of God. What are the consequences of crucifying the Christ? And the first is very clearly the consequence of judgment.

The consequence of judgment. Now what we see in this passage here. Is we see that the human roles are reversed. Don't they? Luke is a great believer in the upside down nature of God's kingdom.

[ 6 : 18 ] So Pilate is not the real judge. And Herod is not the real king. Because the true authority and the true power.

Lies in the hands of their prisoner. But here as the passage begins. Do you notice verse 26. The Roman power machine springs into action. And everybody is a puppet to do their will.

Like Simon of Cyrene. Coming into the city from the countryside. Who is compelled to carry the cross. He had no choice. That is the way human power works.

But that human power is about to be undermined by a greater power. By a more powerful will. By a greater force. The will of God. And the force of his love.

To rescue men and women. Boys and girls. God's will. Is going to be done. God's will is going to be done.

[ 7 : 17 ] By the indestructible power. Of the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. Who is in charge in Luke 23? Who is in charge? Do you see it?

It is God who is orchestrating the whole process. And yet in the midst of it. These human agents. They have their own responsibility. They act voluntarily. They play their part in bringing the cross about.

They are not press ganged like Simon. But they are responsible for their choices. And the greater their knowledge of Christ. The greater their comfortability.

What we must never imagine. For one moment. Is that God suspends his kind of moral governance. His control of his world. We are very used.

Are we? To the law of cause and effect. In the physical realm. We are used to it in all sorts of areas. So think about gravity. You have a cause and an effect.

[ 8 : 18 ] And the law of gravity is something that we live with. You drop something. And it goes down. And it always happens. But we tend to think. In the spiritual realm.

It is not like that. That is how it works. But one of the things. That this passage shows you and I. Is that cause and effect. Is just as active.

In the moral and spiritual realm. As it is in the physical. If you are a willing participant. In the destruction of God's king.

Then there will be inevitable consequences. Because what a man sows. He will also reap. And that is brought out to us again. In verses 28 to 31. Our attention is brought to the weeping women.

The women of Jerusalem. They are forming a kind of professional mourners. A mourner's funeral procession. And they wail. They lament. They pity this poor Jewish man.

[ 9 : 15 ] Who has been led out to a ghastly. And innocent death. At the hands of these barbarous. Occupying forces. But what seems to be happening.

Is actually being reversed. Look at verse 28. Turn into them. Jesus said. Daughters of Jerusalem. Daughters of Jerusalem. Do not weep for me.

But weep for yourselves. And for your children. For behold the days are coming. When they will say. Blessed are the barren. And the wounds that never bore. And the breasts that never nursed. Jesus doesn't want their pity. He doesn't want your pity. He says. Your pity should be directed to yourselves. And to the next generation.

Because in that next generation. He tells them. There will come a day. When that natural joy. Of the birth. And the growth of children. Will seem like a terrible curse. Imagine that.

[10:17] It would be better for your kids. Not to have been born. And the outlook for Jerusalem. And the next generation. Is far worse. Than Jesus' imminent. Torturous death.

Now why is that happening? Well we've seen. What have we seen? We've seen the leaders.

Haven't we? Being. For his crucifixion. And they're getting what they called for.

But what will come. Says Jesus. Is there will be a far more desperate cry. A call. Not for him to be crucified. But verse 30. Do you see what the cry is there? It is for the mountains.

And for the hills. To fall upon us. And that of course. Is the language of Isaiah. And it would immediately. Ring a bell. In the Jewish minds. That this is talking about.

The ultimate. Last judgment of God. That will come upon all humans. And rebellion. And Isaiah's prophecies. Of that last. Great day. Of God's judgment. When multitudes.

[11:15] Will call out. For the mountains. To fall on them. And the hills. To cover them. From the wrath. Of a righteous. And a holy God. And all the judgments.

That happened. Before that day. They are like a prototype. They are like a warning. To you and I. They are a warning. Of judgment. That is yet to come. And this judgment.

Which Jesus is talking about. Was ultimate. Ultimately. Kind of. Typified. The prototype. For something that happened. In Jerusalem. In the year. A.D. 70. The Roman army.

Inveeds that city. And they inflict. The most terrible suffering. On Jerusalem. They scatter. Those. Whom they didn't massacre. They destroyed. The temple. They disperse.

The Jewish nation. And Jesus is talking about that. Because as Luke tells us. When their king. Came riding on a donkey. On that Palm Sunday.

[12:12] They cried out. Hosanna. Hosanna. To the king of David. To the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That was. That day.

But by Friday of that week. It is crucifying. It is crucifying. What Jesus said to them. Is there are consequences. Of rebelling against God. And killing his king.

And it was seen. In A.D. 70. But far more significant. For you and I. This morning. Is that if we find ourselves. Turning against the Lord Jesus. And not receiving his salvation.

If we say. No. I don't want it. And we set our hearts. Against him. How do you think. You will escape. The wrath of God.

How do you think. That you will escape. The wrath of God. On the last day. Every single one of us. Will face. The God of holiness. And the God of righteousness. And yes.

[13:13] The God of mercy. And love. Who sent his son. To die for us. But if you throw that back. In his face. How can you expect. Anything but his judgment.

For as Jesus says. In verse 21. Do these things. When the wood. They do these things. When the wood is green. What will happen. When it's dry. What he's saying.

Is that moment. For the leaders of Jerusalem. The tree looks green. And it looks strong. And it looks powerful. And they are delighted. Aren't they. They're delighted.

That he is about to be crucified. But that fatal action. Of crucifying God's king. Turns the tree. From a green. And strong tree. Into a lifeless trunk.

Just like the withered fig tree. And what do you do. With wood. That is dried out. You burn it. And Isaiah's message. For you and I.

[14:12] Is that one of the consequences. Of the cross. Is judgment. And it must be judgment. If we refuse to acknowledge. And bow before God's king. And the unrepentant criminal.

And the scoffing rulers. Are examples. Of the same reaction. To the death of Jesus. Which you find. In the world today. Notice what they say.

There are plenty of people. Who say. With the rulers. He saved others. He made great claims.

About himself. Let him save himself. Let him save himself. If he is the Christ. The son of God. The chosen one.

But it is precisely. Because he will not save himself. That he is able to save others. They see. Don't they. His death. As the proof positive.

That he cannot be the Christ. He cannot be the chosen king. And ruler. If he had the power. He claimed. Well he would use it. For his rescue. Wouldn't he. It comes up three times.

[15:11] Just look at the passage with me. There is the religious leaders. In verse 35. Let him save himself. It comes up in the soldiers. In verse 37. Do you see that. If you are the king of the Jews.

Save yourself. And it comes up with the criminal. In verse 39. Are you not the Christ. Save yourself and us. But there is no understanding.

Is there. What is happening. Just think about it. If Jesus had got that criminal. Down from the cross. Which Jesus of course. Could have done. And he wished to.

To deliver that criminal. From the sentence. Of his crimes. Would that have been. An act of morality. Would that have been right. In that first criminal.

Who did a crime. Deserving of death. There was no repentance. In that first criminal. There was no recognition. Of guilt. It is fellow criminal. Isn't it.

[16:08] It's the other one. Verse 40. Who says. Don't you fear God. Since you are under. The same sentence. Of condemnation. And we. Have been judged.

Justly rightly. It's right. Do you see the point. That is being made here. There has to be. A judgment. Judgment. If there is ever. Going to be a solution.

To the problem of evil. There has to be a judgment. If there is ever. Going to be a heaven. Opened. There has to be. A judgment. On evil. But the Jesus.

Who entered Jerusalem. As our king. On Palm Sunday. Also came. As the Passover lamb. On Good Friday. And just as the Passover lamb. In the Old Testament.

Was the means. By which. God's wrath. And anger. Was turned aside. From his people. And they were delivered. Delivered from their bondage. And their slavery.

[17:02] And they became. The great nation. That God. Made them. So in the same way. At the cross. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Passover lamb.

Jesus Christ. Offers himself. The lamb of God. Who bears away. The sin of the world. Suffers the judgment. He takes upon it himself. He bears our guilt.

Behold the man. Upon a cross. My sin. Upon his shoulders. That is what is happening. As you look at the cross.

There is judgment. And Jesus has borne it for us. And if you reject. What Jesus has done for you. You will face. That judgment.

Yourself. And you will be cast out. From the loving presence. Of this holy. And righteous God. And you will face his anger. For all eternity.

[17:59] And that is a very sobering thought. Isn't it this morning? That question. Of the dying thief. Do you not fear God? We are under that judgment.

That same judgment. That same sentence of condemnation. Well Luke wants us to get very clear. That is the first consequence of the cross. But secondly.

And gloriously. At the heart of it all. The second consequence of the cross. Is that there is rescue. And it is because there is the reality. Of God's judgment.

Against all human pride. And rebellion. That Jesus came to be the saviour. He came to be the rescuer. And Luke wrote his good news of salvation. And it comes through firstly.

Doesn't it? In verse 34. Where the first saying. From the cross. Is a prayer of forgiveness. Father forgive them. For they know not what they are doing.

[18:58] And I think it is obviously. For the crucifixion party. Those Roman soldiers. They are foolish. And ignorant. And they are under orders anyway. But it is the most amazing prayer.

Isn't it? And it is a very. Very precious window. Into the heart. Of our Lord Jesus. For there at the moment. As they are driving the nails.

Into his hands at the cross. And they hang him up to die. In the very act of his death. Which they are complicit in. They are guilty as well. And even in their ignorance. Becomes the means.

By which. They can be forgiven. Isn't it an amazing thing? Father forgive them. For they do not know. What they are doing. And it is an important strand.

In Luke's story. The opportunity exists now. You can be forgiven. In Christ. You can be forgiven soldiers.

[ 19 : 55 ] Because of what is happening. Before your very eyes. And that strand. Becomes even clearer. Isn't it? In the reaction of the second criminal. From verses 40 to 53. As he hangs between these criminals.

He is numbered with the transgressors. He makes his grave with the wicked. Isaiah 53. And so the suffering servant. Who is God's anointed king.

Is viewed by the men who die either side of him. And the reaction of the first criminal is to be expected. But the reaction of the second criminal is extraordinary. Before he calls on Jesus. Do you see verse 41. Just look closely there. He affirms two great realities. We indeed suffer justly. Indeed justly we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. The first statement is about his own guilt. And about our own guilt. And the second statement is this.

[ 20 : 58 ] But this man has done nothing wrong. It's about Jesus' innocence. And when we hear him say that. It wakes up our memories.

Doesn't it? For a few weeks ago. Do you remember what Pilate said? Three times. I find no guilt in him. He has done nothing deserving of death. I have found in him no guilt deserving death.

Jesus is the innocent sufferer. He is the lamb without blemish. And without fault. And Luke could hardly be making it clearer to you this morning. The death of this man.

Is the death of an innocent man. A righteous man. And therefore his death. Must be for others. He is the rescuer. Who gives himself up for the guilty.

Now of course you might be sitting there and saying. Well it's just a tragic injustice. That Jesus is hanging there. But the point that Luke is making. Is that God is in control.

[ 22 : 00 ] That God is bringing his purposes. His will to their fruition. And if Jesus does not deserve to die. Which of course he doesn't. He must be dying for others.

The wages of sin. Is death. But he had no sin. And that is what the crying. Dying criminal.

Recognises. And so he turns to Jesus. And says Jesus. Which is the name of his earthly ministry. Isn't it? You shall give him the name of Jesus. Because he will save his people from their sins.

He is the saviour. I know you are the king. I believe you are God's king. Because you are coming into a kingdom. That is not of this world. So Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.

It's an extraordinary prayer. He says. I am suffering the wrath of the authorities. For sins I have committed. But there is an eternal penalty. That waits beyond death in the eternal kingdom.

[ 23 : 01 ] I believe that is your kingdom Jesus. So Jesus remember me. Rescue me. He wants to become a subject of that kingdom. In the life to come. If the king will receive him.

And will he? We will look at verse 43. It's a most staggering verse isn't it? Verse 43. And he said to him. Truly I say to you today. You will be with me in paradise.

Not only does his faith in Jesus. His rescuer. Bring him immediate forgiveness. Today. Right now. But complete assurance. And acceptance into God's kingdom.

Of the heavens. And assurance. At the moment he breathes his last. Though he be absent with the body. He is present with the Lord. He will be with his king in paradise.

Where there will be no more pain. And no more crying. And no more sin. And no more curse. And there will be no purgatory. And there will be no waiting. Today with me in paradise.

[ 24 : 02 ] What a wonderful saviour Jesus Christ is. But you can say. Well how do you know that's true? How do you know that's true? Verse 45 explains it.

Do you see it? The curtain of the temple was torn in two. Historically this happened. All the gospel writers record it for us. That at the death of Jesus. The veil. Or the curtain temple.

It was a very thick curtain. That prohibited access to the most holy place. Where God's glory. Was said to dwell. That curtain was ripped in two.

As Jesus died. Matthew tells us. It was ripped in two. From the top to the bottom. By which he means. That it was not by the hands of men. But by the hands of God.

And it was far too thick. For any human hands to tear it. It was the action of God himself. And that is the point of the death. Of God's senselessness.

[ 25 : 03 ] That he has ripped down the barriers. Which separate human beings. From God. And as God's son. The Lord Jesus. Bore the punishment.

For your sin. And my sin. Dying. In our place. As our substitute. The price has been paid. For you to be forgiven. For the kingdom of heaven.

To be opened. To all who believe in him. And so God. Tears down the barrier. Which he himself. Has authorised to be there.

He tears it with his own hands. And he says to all the world. Come. Come. There is fellowship available with God. You can know me.

You can be forgiven. The work is done. And this great salvation. Has been finally. And fully accomplished. And secured. And as Jesus cries out.

[ 26 : 02 ] With a loud voice. Into your hands. Father. I commend my spirit. The rescue is complete. And Luke states. Right at the start of his book.

Doesn't he? Do you remember that thing? He has written these things. That you might have certainty. About the things that you've been taught. And this is how we know. That the thief is in heaven. This is how.

We know. That if we put our faith. In Jesus. We shall be with him one day. The proof. That Jesus is the Christ of God. It is not by him coming down from the cross.

It is an act of magic. But the temple veil. Being torn from top to bottom. And the criminal. Entering into paradise. That is what it is about. Bearing shame.

And scoffing rude. In my place. Condemned he stood. Now today. And tomorrow. As you go back to work.

[ 27 : 00 ] You need to be convinced of that. And you and I. Need to let that dominate. And motivate our thinking. And living. And there is so much. Isn't there. In religion. That will offer you a ladder.

To climb in order. For you to make yourself. Acceptable to God. Achievements. That you've got to notch up. Religious practices. That you have to follow.

To make yourself. Acceptable. To whatever you see. As your God. As your ultimate authority. But no human ladder. Can ever reach. Paradise. What could that man.

On the cross. Have done. To atone for his sin. What could that man. Hanging on the cross. In the very last hours. Of his life.

What could he have done. To make himself right. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Same with you. The great good news.

[ 27 : 55 ] Of the gospel. Is that God himself. Has come down the ladder. Has he. In the person. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. To rescue us. The dying criminal. Could acquire no merit.

He could do nothing. To save himself. And neither can you. And neither can I. But he entered into paradise. That very day. Because Jesus was dying. In his place.

As his substitute. To rescue him. To rescue him. From the just punishment. Of his sins. And that is our message. And that is why Christianity.

The biblical Christianity. Is different. From all the world religions. And that is why we can proclaim it. Is it because God has come down to us. To rescue us.

And that is why. This morning. We must never write anybody off. There are those of you. Aren't they. Here today. And you have been praying for friends. And family. And work colleagues.

[ 28 : 51 ] And folks that you long to come to the Lord Jesus. And it seems perhaps. It's not going to happen. And it's taken so long. Well here is this man.

Here is this man. At the end of his life. And we haven't heard the end of the story. Have we? We haven't heard the end of the story. You have people that have died in your family.

And believe it or not. You do not know the end of the story. And we must never think. That anyone is outside of the reach of God's love. And his mercy. There will be many people in heaven.

Who it will be an enormous shock to see them. And we will see them. I never thought we'd see you here. They'll probably say the same to us. And there will be many people in heaven.

Who like the dying thief. Turn to Christ in their final breath. But of course that's very tempting for some of you isn't it? It's very tempting for you. I used to think it when I was a teenager.

[ 29 : 47 ] That I can put it off. That we can wait until that time. Right at the end. Boom. And then I'll become a Christian. I'll enjoy myself. I'll have a wild time.

I'll sow my wild oats. And then right at the end. When I've really enjoyed my life. And I've lived my pleasure. Well then when my final breath comes. I'll turn to the Lord. Well there's two things to say to that.

Isn't it? One. You don't know when you will die. You don't know. And you don't know what state you'll be in. When you come to die. As it seems to me.

That famous quote isn't it? These stories of two thieves. That one of the thieves was saved. So that no one may despair. But one of the thieves was lost.

So that no one may presume. The Bible is very clear. That today is the day of salvation. And the only person that tells you tomorrow. Is the devil. Rescue is available.

[ 30 : 48 ] The curtain has been torn. Jesus opened the way to heaven. And very quickly. The third consequence. Is that of vindication. Even at the moment. When everything seemed lost. God's king is vindicated.

This happened firstly by the hand of God. Don't you? Verses 44 and 45. It was now about the sixth hour. And there was darkness. Over the whole hour. Until the ninth hour. While the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple. Was torn in two. From midday. There is darkness. The sun fades. And then. This is a profound effect. Doesn't it? Look at verse 48. And all the crowds. That assembled for this fact. And when they saw what had taken place. They returned home. Beating their breasts. There is this otherworldly darkness. It overwhelms everybody. You can imagine the effect. Here is.

[ 31 : 44 ] Here is the sign of God's judgment. From the exodus. But here is the sign. That man is not in control. What have they done? What have they done?

That there should be such a natural. Upheaval. What have they done? The light of the world. They snuff out.

Creation. Hides his face. Well might the sun in darkness hide. And keep his glory in. When God the mighty maker died. For man the creature sinned. That is what is happening.

And it's not just the natural world. Is it? Look at the human context. There is vindication there. Verse 47. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place. He praised God.

Saying certainly this man was innocent. This man was righteous. This man did not deserve to die. Yes but more than that. He recognises. As he witnesses the crucifixion.

[ 32 : 41 ] That Jesus commits himself to his father. And Luke is saying to us. This is the exodus. The exodus that he would accomplish. All those chapters back.

When he came from Galilee. Beginning his journey to Jerusalem. And he dies with the confidence. Of a son coming home to his father. And that led to this great statement of truth.

Certainly this man was righteous. Was innocent. And not only with God. With regard to the accusations. And the charges. But right in relationship.

To the divine power of God. Do you remember that the centurion. He'd listen to those words. Father forgive them. For they do not know what they're doing. He'd heard him say. Truly I say to you.

You'll be with me in paradise. And in a deeper level. He began to realise. That the inscription of verse 38. This is the king of the Jews. Is true. This is the king. God's king.

[ 33 : 43 ] Not only of the Jews. But of all who would turn to him. And trust him. And so you see. The centurion becomes the great outsider. The Roman occupying army.

Kind of typified by him. The commander of the crucifixion. And he finds to his situation reversed. And he's brought to recognition. That this man indeed was a righteous man.

And he's saying far more. Than that this guy was innocent. Because you see those three words. Right at the start of that verse. He praised God.

He knew that this innocent man. Convicted by the greatest power. In all the world. Was actually. The representative. Of the greatest power of all. Greater than Caesar. And all his armies.

And here is the beginning. Of an understanding of the cross of Christ. That he turns everything upside down. The great reversal of everything that was seen. The triumph of good over evil. Of love over hatred.

[ 34 : 43 ] Of self-sacrifice over self-serving. And if the dying thief. Is the first convert of Calvary. It seems to me pretty certain. That this Roman centurion was the second.

Do you see that Jew. And Gentile one in Christ. And of course. The greatest vindication is the empty tomb. Which is where we'll go to next week. But I wonder whether you will spend this week.

Meditating on the consequences of the cross. That you'll use this Lord's day. To think about the consequences of the cross. Which is judgment on sin.

Rescue. For sinners. And vindication for our Caesar. Let's sing. Let's sing.