

Luke 23:35-43

March 15, 2017 – MIDWEEK LENT 3

## ***The Beauty of Repent: Turn to Jesus***<sup>1</sup> **He Holds the Key to Heaven**

Dear fellow criminals at the cross of Christ:

Introduction: Can you really learn to “expect the unexpected”?

Restaurants – good name, fine seating, quick service...mouse runs across the floor

House – wealthy suburb, fine reputation, greatness...doorbell hanging by a wire, crumbled siding

Christ’s life – Wise men...feeding 5,000...mockery...crucifixion...criminal with faith to **Turn to Jesus** and see in His nailed hands **the Key to Heaven**. So unexpected in the midst of living hell.

### **I. Mockery – nasty human habit to turn away from the God the King**

- A. Rulers: *...to turn away from God and hate what is true*
  - 1. Religious professionals – piling insult onto injury
  - 2. No dispute with Jesus helping and healing: Hated Him more!
- B. Soldiers: *...to turn away from God and prey without mercy on the weak*
  - 1. Torture professionals – wanting more fun than purple robe, crown of thorns
  - 2. “Hail, King of the Jews!” – hanging on a beam of wood
- C. Pontius Pilate: *...to turn away from God so that wrong can be right and right can be wrong*
  - 1. Mocking Jesus on trial, “You are a king then!” (John 18:37)
  - 2. Mocking the Jews with his sign.
  - 3. Major miscarriage of justice that would never wash away.
  - 4. Too busy running a country and killing the prickly people of Judea.
- D. Criminal: *...to have no real love for God or faith in God, yet expect everything – even salvation itself from him*
  - 1. Mocking the Messiah!
  - 2. Heckled by the scum of society?
- E. Christ is the King we don’t expect.
  - 1. No mockery, only respect, no brutality from army privates, death row inmates
  - 2. Thrones, not crosses. Crowns, not thorns. Music of bands, not catcalls from crowds.

Transition: Upsetting? Rulers – *Put a sock in it!* Soldiers – *Be kind for a change!* Pilate – *Rip off your sign for John 3:16!* Criminal – *Keep your mouth shut!*

Why was Christ there? *Sock in my mouth* – when it’s time to speak God’s truth? *Enjoy hurting others* – angry words instead of nails and hammers? *Life a billboard for sin* – crimes of mine not caught, thoughts unseen / unpunished? *Crowd turn my back on Christ* – religious kook?

*Nasty human tendency to turn away from God so that we can go right along with sinful crowd.*

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<sup>1</sup> 2017 Lenten Series: *Repent – Turn to Jesus!*. Available at 1-800-662-6022. [M.C. 3/08/2017]

## II. Faith – sees the Keys

- A. Unexpected voice of faith-filled repentance: “\_\_\_ (vv.40-42)
- B. Living hell of criminal’s life: practiced evil, Roman jail, death sentence, crowd, nails, torture, soul-chilling reality of something far worse waiting for him on the other side of his final breath.
- C. Glimpse of heaven
  - 1. Jesus’ word of forgiveness: “*Father, forgive them...*”
  - 2. Not knowing what to pray: “*Jesus, remember me...*”
- D. Jesus did.
  - 1. “*Amen. TODAY you will be with me in paradise.*”
  - 2. *Jesus shows a marvelous tendency of God to be gracious with the most undeserving.*
    - especially criminals on a cross
    - Jesus turned the Key and opened the gates of heaven for this criminal!

Conclusion: **Jesus came to save sinners by not saving Himself.**

☪ “*Save yourself....Save yourself....Save yourself....*”

- † “But instead of saving Himself, Jesus completely sacrificed Himself! His forsakenness is your forgiveness. His judgment is your justification. His humiliation is your glory. His pain is your peace. His wounds are your healing. His death is your life!”
- † *Jesus, remember me too. Remember me...*
  - *...in depression, when life is only clouds and loneliness.*
  - *... in heartbreak, when everything seems to hurt.*
  - *... in turmoil, when those I love most are terrible to me.*
  - *... in sickness, when I can’t remember feeling well.*
  - *...at the funeral home, when tears of good-bye sting my eyes.*
  - *...each and every day that proves I’m not in heaven yet.*
- † *Jesus does remember us.*
  - the very hairs of our heads!
  - perfectly how to forget: “**Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.**” (Psalm 25:7)
  - One day, someday, maybe today – we’ll be with Christ and a forgiven criminal in paradise!

**Turn to Jesus; He Holds the Key. Turn to Jesus.** *The key turns...* Always Jesus. *The lock loosened...* Only Jesus – *Heaven’s gate stands open wide!* Amen.