

**DAILY READINGS**

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|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Sunday</b>    | Luke 23:26-43                                       |
| <b>Monday</b>    | Luke 23:44-49; Psalm 59:1-5; Proverbs 10:14-16      |
| <b>Tuesday</b>   | Luke 23:50-56; Psalm 59:6-10; Proverbs 10:17-20     |
| <b>Wednesday</b> | Matthew 27:32-61; Psalm 59:11-17; Proverbs 10:21-24 |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | Mark 15:21-47; Psalm 60; Proverbs 10:25-27          |
| <b>Friday</b>    | John 19:16-42; Psalm 61; Proverbs 10:28-30          |
| <b>Saturday</b>  | Psalm 22:14-18; Psalm 62; Proverbs 10:31-32         |

**DEVOTIONAL: READ LUKE 23:26-43**

It seemed to be the darkest moment in all of human history. Jesus, who came to save all of mankind from sin and death, was being crucified. A crowd formed around Jesus' cross. Simon of Cyrene had helped Jesus carry the cross. His friends and followers mourned His crucifixion. Two criminals were executed with Him. Soldiers and leaders mocked Him as He hung there. Onlookers gathered around the horror.

Yet in this crowded cast of characters, an unlikely friendship was formed and there was new hope. In between gasps for breath, Jesus and two criminals talked. Their conversation was short, but destiny-altering. The first criminal mocked Jesus. The second criminal rebuked the first and pleaded with Jesus. This criminal recognized his guilt and Jesus' innocence, and an eternal destiny hinged upon this.

The second criminal's words revealed what he believed about Jesus. He believed Jesus was innocent (we call

that righteousness), that the criminals were guilty (we call that sin), and that Jesus was God's promised King who had the authority to forgive sins (we call that salvation). Even though Jesus would soon die, the second criminal believed Jesus would somehow conquer death and establish His Kingdom (we call this faith). This criminal's response of faith in Jesus changed his eternal destiny. Jesus answered him, "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). What eternal hope and light in the midst of a time that seems like complete darkness!

Salvation is the gift of God, purchased by Jesus' death and resurrection. Salvation is experienced personally when we believe in Jesus and His work on the cross. As the apostles teach, salvation is only a work of God's grace, and we receive it only through our faith. This is an incredible gift of hope; we can have the same promise as the criminal, to be with Jesus in paradise, so long as we trust in Him!

## REFLECTION

Read through Luke's account of the crucifixion (Luke 23:26-56) and consider the weight of your sin. How do they relate? How does this make you feel?

How can you have the same hope as the second criminal of being with Jesus in paradise? Walk through the second criminal's observations of Jesus in your own life: recognize Jesus' righteousness, acknowledge your sin, and trust that Jesus has conquered death.

Who can you invite to celebrate Easter with you this year, encouraging them to start a relationship with Jesus? Consider bringing someone new to the Easter service or inviting them into your family's celebration.

During Holy Week, beginning the Sunday before Easter, a family devotional is available each day (page 158) to help your family remember Jesus' journey to the cross.

## DISCUSSION

How will you and your family celebrate Easter?

## PRAYER

Lord, You are the ruler of the universe. You are holy, good, and righteous. Sin can be found nowhere in You. You are just, true, and full of grace. Only You have the ability to forgive sins.

Yet, knowing Your goodness, I have sinned against You. I have turned away from Your glory and chosen to live my own way rather than clinging to Your presence. I know that because of my sin I should be condemned to be eternally separated from You. Yet, You have made a way! Jesus, You are blameless and died so that I may have life in You. Thank You, Jesus, that You have opened my eyes to my sin. Thank You that if I trust in You and call on Your name for my forgiveness, I can have an eternal hope in You!

"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6). Amen.