

Nobody Left Out 8 – The Criminal

Welcome back to Redemption Church of Plano Tx! Thank you for joining us. My name is Chris Fluitt, and I am happy to share the Word of God with you today.

Before we jump into the message I want to say, “Happy Father’s Day!” Thank you, dads!

Also happy Juneteenth. A day we celebrate freedom for everyone.

Nobody Left Out

We are in the 8th and final week of our sermon series “Nobody Left Out.” We encouraged you to read the companion 40-day devotional with us. I applaud everyone who took the time to see this through, and I hope you have grown closer to Jesus.

To anyone who has not finished the book, or maybe to anyone who never actually started it... We aren't throwing stones of judgment at you. I do think this devotional is worth your time and will greatly bless you, so I want to encourage you go ahead and read through it.

The book is widely available, "Nobody Left Out" by author Michael Murray. If we can help you get a copy, or if we can encourage you in anyway, please let us know! We are willing!

Available here:

<https://www.amazon.com/Nobody-Left-Out-Messes-Devotional-ebook/dp/B08MY583G8>

On this last day of the series we are going to talk about the criminal.

The Criminal

Turn with me to Luke chapter 23. Luke 23 gives us a description of the crucifixion.

Luke 23:32-47 (NIV) 32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” [c]
And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save

himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

38 There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same

sentence? 41 We are punished justly,
for we are getting what our deeds
deserve. But this man has done
nothing wrong.”

42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember
me when you come into your
kingdom.”

43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell
you, today you will be with me in
paradise.”

44 It was now about noon, and
darkness came over the whole land
until three in the afternoon, 45 for
the sun stopped shining. And the
curtain of the temple was torn in
two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud

voice, “Father, into your hands I
commit my spirit.” When he had said
this, he breathed his last.

47 The centurion, seeing what had
happened, praised God and said,
“Surely this was a righteous man.”

Have you ever had a bad day? Of course, you have.

The Worst moment of the Worst day

In the middle of one of your bad days have you ever had someone come up and ask for your help? Now some people never like being asked for assistance. There are some people who put out an unfriendly persona for the express

purpose of deterring those who would approach them and ask for help.

Regardless of your willingness to help others, there are days where it's harder for everyone to muster up a smile and say, "Yes, I'll be right there to help."

There are times where people catch you at the worst moment of the worst day.

In Luke 23, Jesus is having the worst day of His life. His day in Luke 23 makes our worst day look like a slight inconvenience or a light affliction (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The worst day...

- Jesus is betrayed in the dark hours of night. He is wrongly arrested and taken to a shame of a trial where people lie about him, slap him and spit at him.

- He is forced to stand between several governmental authorities, Pontius Pilate & king Herod, and none of them really know what to do.
- Jesus is beaten mercilessly with a whip that has 9 strands that are embedded with sharp stones and hooks. This “cat of 9 tails” tore his flesh.
- A mob cries out for his crucifixion
- They took his hands and feet and drove large spikes through them and into the large wooden cross.
- Jesus was hung upon this cruel cross in full view of a massive crowd.
- In order to breathe, Jesus would need to pull his body up by his nail pierced hands and feet.

Further, in the middle of this His worst day... and at the worst moment... one of the criminals asks Jesus an all-important question. Even more, one of the criminals makes a personal request of Jesus.

We read this scripture today. You may have read this portion of scripture before, but you and I have probably always read it incorrectly. To correctly render this verse, you have to remember the agony of trying to breath, slowly suffocating, and the pain of trying to live.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

The Worst moment of the Worst day

It was the worst day for Jesus, and here in His final moments the Son of God couldn’t even die in peace.

Jesus had lived a life that was surrounded by crowds of people asking for miracles, wisdom, healing, and even food. Now here Jesus is, surrounded by a crowd that has yelled “crucify,” and there is one single voice that has the audacity to approach Jesus at the worst moment of the worst day.

If there was ever a time to say... “sorry not today...” it was at this moment.

If there was ever a time to respond in anger and cuss someone out and tell them to go to hell... it was this moment.

But on the worst moment of the worst day, Jesus took the little strength he had and in such a love that is beyond my depth to understand, he lifted himself up and gasped for air to respond this way...

43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

This is Jesus. You want to know what Jesus is like? This is it.

At the worst moment of the worst day, Jesus received a thief.

At the worst moment of the worst day, Jesus will receive you.

It's not what it looks like

There are many elements to this story just a little deceiving to the eye.

When it comes to life, there are often problems we sense, but we can't fully understand. We can look at people and situations and judge them wrongly.

When we hear the story of an unwed mother... we could wrongly reprimand her in our own minds.

When we see the person begging by the side of the road... perhaps it is more complicated than the open and shut judgment that goes through our brains.

When a child experiences a melt down and appears out of control... maybe there is more going on under the surface? Maybe that child is struggling so terribly inside with a sensory issue, and they are so frustrated; it seems no one understands them.

When someone confesses a crisis of faith... it is so easy to judge them incorrectly.

In Luke 23, on the 'worst day', things where not quite as they appeared.

What does a king look like?

Jesus had been ridiculed the entire day, called a king.

He was paraded around by Herod...

The Roman guards made that crown of thorns...

The sign above him that read "king of the Jews" was meant as a cruel joke...

Jesus did not look like a king. Friend it was not what it looked like...

What does a citizen of God's Kingdom look like?

That thief who wheezed his request to Jesus did not appear to be a citizen of any king's domain.

That thief was surely an outcast; no one would claim as their own.

That thief did not look like a citizen of God's Kingdom. Friend, it is not what it looks like...

What does redemption look like?

Your mind would never picture redemption as 2 dying men wheezing a short conversation from a cross.

The crucifixion was a brutal public execution for those that society

considered beyond redemption.

Crucifixion was for those who could never be rehabilitated. They were habitual criminals who had shown they could not change, so they were labeled beyond redemption.

The cross doesn't look like redemption. Friends, aren't you glad it was not what it looked like?

Let's stay on this point for a minute more...

Jesus and the criminal have this conversation and then they both die. That doesn't look like redemption either.

No one standing there at the cross rejoiced in the redemption of the cross.

Everyone there mourned what would be a funeral.

Some of you have had to attend funerals. Some of you are praying to avoid a funeral – you are praying that God would lift up your friends and loved ones.

What happens in Luke 23 reminds us that death is not what it looks like. Death looks like there is no redemption.

Friends, all my hope is found in the reality that lies beyond what my human eyes can see.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV) For we live(walk) by faith, not by sight.

The thief changed things up right before he died. In the closing moments of his

life, he stopped trying to see with his eyes, and he started to live by faith.

Musician

We are about to talk to God.

On p102 in his book, “Nobody Left Out,” Michael Murray wrote these wonderful words...

“As Jesus grew weaker in the world’s eyes, he somehow started looking more kingly to this criminal”

As we draw to the close of this sermon and series, I want to ask you, “How do you see Jesus?”

Can you see Jesus through the eyes of faith?

On the worst day that Jesus ever lived, a criminal made a request. His request was granted because Jesus leaves nobody out.

Will you come talk to Jesus today?