



Sermon Discussion Questions

Sunday, September 11, 2011

Introducing: Jesus and Two Criminals

Luke 23:32-43

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Note to Group Leaders:

Leaders, we have put more questions here than you may be able to use. The purpose of this is that certain questions will work for certain groups and so some of these questions will not be good ones for your group. So, pick and choose what works best for your group

Introduce it:

Today marked the 10th anniversary of 9/11 terrorist attack. Share as a group what you were doing when you found out about the attacks. Remember together what was going on in you. What was your response to God during that time?

Watching thousands of people lose their lives can be a very surreal moment. Way too many emotions are mixed up and too much to make sense of. Even watching one person die reminds us that God's original plan was not for man to know death. When have you experienced the death of someone? Share that moment with the group. In what ways has it made you look at death differently?

Revisit it: learn the passage preached on.

Read the passage again as a group: Luke 23:32-43

In looking at the passage, what do you notice about the perspective of death during this time? What are things people are saying and doing that tell you more about their understanding of death and life? Look at each character in this passage in this light.

Why do you think the rulers hated Jesus so much? What are the things that he did that caused them to "enjoy" his death and suffering? What do you think allows a human heart to come to this place?

Look at this passage in light of the events of 9/11/01. What had Americans done and what was going on in the heart of terrorist that allowed their hearts to come to place that they "enjoyed" destruction and death?

Jesus was crucified by rulers that despised him and hung by criminals whose actions may have "deserved" death. In Jesus' response to both of them, what do we learn about his understanding of people and death?

In what ways does his response challenge your response to those you think "deserve" death?

Relook at it: see other places in the Bible that speak to sermon.

In our sermon today, we see Jesus paying the ultimate price in the midst of those that we might think deserve death. It calls us to remember that we too are the rulers and the criminals on the cross.

Read Romans 5:6-8; Ephesians 2:8-9

We recognize that Jesus died for us while we were still sinners. In what ways do you tend to forget that you were like the rulers and the criminal on the cross? How would Jesus' prayer, "forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" apply to you?

In what ways have you forgotten that you too were saved by grace, through faith, and not by anything you have done?

Use it: don't just learn the passage but use it.

This passage causes us to let God challenge our understanding death and who deserves it and who does not. It's a time to be honest before God. Take a sheet of paper and write down names of people in our history, people in your present, or people in your past that you believe deserve death. Then write beside their name the reasons why. Be honest. Now, beside that, write why you think their actions deserve death in comparison to your actions. Allow God to wrestle with those thoughts.

For those that are in your present or past, take some time this month and reconnect with these people, asking God to help you see them as people that he died for.

Remember it: memorize a verse that helps you to remember and use it.

This week, try to memorize this verse: Luke 23:34

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And they divided up his clothes by casting lots."

Write it on a note card and put on your bathroom mirror or on the dashboard of your car. If you have children, talk about this passage with them and tell them you need their help to memorize this verse. Ask them to memorize it with you. Let them quiz you during the week.