



# the Source

*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...*

Sure, I'm thankful for the unconditional love Jesus shows for me. He died for me while I was yet a sinner, and I still am moved by that whenever I think on it. Beyond all that, I must confess that there's something else about Jesus that's always fascinated me...his cunning. Take Luke 20:20-26 for example. Jesus is presented with the question, "Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?". He's put in the impossible spot of angering the government officials by encouraging outright tax resistance or by angering the common people oppressed by excessive taxes of the time. His answer is this: "[G]ive to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's". It's masterful. This is a no-win situation, and Jesus turns it into a scene that demonstrates that he's far beyond the petty squabbles of the world.

**Consider  
the Source  
Luke 23:32 - 43**

We find Jesus in today's scripture in the most unforgiving of no-win situations. On the cross for the supposed crime of insurrection, officials jeer at him saying, "let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!". Of course, if Jesus did in fact come off the cross in power and glory at that moment, rather than submitting to the authority of the government that put him there, he would prove himself an insurrectionist. Not that a display of power would convince the leaders of the day, as they had witnessed Jesus's miracles and sought all the more to have him killed. Instead of saving himself, Jesus turns to the wrongdoer hanging next to him and said, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." Rather than saving himself, Jesus saved another. And once again, Christ was victorious even in death, turning a no-win situation into one that would triumph over death itself.

— Robin Levins, First Church member

## A Family Affair

*Family Affair* is reviewing the events of Holy Week during the Lenten season. Families will have the opportunity to visit all the events live at Resurrection Celebration on April 9<sup>th</sup>.

Following the Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus retreated to spend time in prayer with his Heavenly Father, as he often did. On this night, he was very upset because he knew he was to endure great suffering. Jesus asked God if there was any other way he could fulfill God's work, but he was open to accept God's answer.

Read the story of Gethsemane together in Matthew 26:36-46 or Mark 14: 32-42. The writers of the Scriptures want us to be sure to know how important it was for Jesus to speak with God. Share with your family the times you talk to God. Do you pray at meal times? Or before bed? God loves us and always wants to hear from us... when we are happy, when we are sad or even when we are mad! Jesus' prayer time in the Garden gave him strength to endure his suffering and crucifixion. Spending time with God in prayer can give us strength too. Make a plan with your family to spend extra time talking to God during this special Lenten season.

*Dear God, thank you for prayer. Thank you for listening to us. Help us remember to share with you always. In Jesus name, Amen.*

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

## Monday: Psalm 22

There are echoes of Jesus's crucifixion in the words of Psalm 22. The themes of abandonment were not unique to Jesus's day. Casting lots for a prisoner's clothing shows a callous disregard of others, which humankind has continued to exhibit throughout the centuries.

- Can you think of a time when people in your presence talked about you, but not to you?
- Can you think of a time when you felt like you had no control over your circumstances, but people who didn't care about you did have that power?
- Psalm 22 begins with a despairing view, yet doesn't stay that way. What moves the author from sorrow to rapturous hope?

## Tuesday: Luke 4:20-30

Jesus predicts the thoughts of the people in his hometown and simultaneously foreshadows the response of those around him at the cross. "Doctor, cure yourself!" "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" The widow at Zarephath in Sidon and Naaman the Syrian have something in common - they were outsiders saved by prophets of Israel. Notably in the widow's case, her son was raised from the dead.

- Why do you think Jesus invokes them in Luke 4?
- What parallels do we see between this story and this week's scripture?

## Wednesday: Luke 23:32-33

Luke places special emphasis on outsiders in his gospels. It is they who first receive special invitation to the new life to which Jesus calls us. When something is repeated, the author is trying to call attention to it, and we should pay mind. Here twice (and again in verse 39) we are reminded that Jesus is being crucified with "criminals".

- Why this special emphasis on Jesus's final company?
- The crucifixion location has an evocative name as well. I doubt you're going to see any suburban subdivisions with a name like *The Skull*. It's just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Why do you think the author calls attention to the location?

## Thursday: Luke 23:39-43

There's something unusual about the "penitent criminal" here. Look how he addresses Jesus in verse 42. He is in fact the only person in the gospels to address Jesus simply as "Jesus". Others will call Jesus "Lord", "Teacher", "Jesus of Nazareth", or any number of other titles. This wrongdoer, stripped of his garments, dignity, and soon his life, has no pretense and simply addresses the Savior of the World by his name.

- Is there anything special about this?
- Is there something holier about this frank salutation?

## Friday: Luke 24:44-49

The biggest reason we are Christians is that the story didn't end on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead to demonstrate his power over death itself. The penitent criminal asks, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" Jesus gives a message after the resurrection that "repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations".

- On the cross, Jesus says of his captors "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Now risen from the dead, he opens the minds of the disciples to the scriptures. What does this enable them to do?
- As Jesus frees you from "the same sentence of condemnation", just as he saved the penitent criminal, what are you going to do with that freedom today?