

# A Message To A Thief

*“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified Him, along with the criminals—one on His right, the other on His left.” (Luke23:32-33) “There was written notice above Him, which read: THIS IS THE KING...One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: ‘Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘Since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this has done nothing wrong. Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ Jesus answered him, ‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Like23:38-43)*

Dear man, woman, friend, my dear reader, and to myself as well: *“How do we sort out things in our life? What do we always aim for?”*

This week’s chosen passages from the Bible speak about an aspect of Jesus’ crucifixion. For He was crucified along with two others, one on His right and other on His left side. In the Gospel of Matthew and Mark they were called robbers. In the Gospel of Luke they were called criminals, and in John’s Gospel, he called them men. We may call them bad people, but let us not be in haste to say anything beyond that before getting to know more.

We see the whole picture of the world while Jesus was hanging on the cross. We see not because of those different nationalities that surrounded Him and those that passed by, but because of those men hanging with Him. *The following are the points that these two men and the whole world share in common:*

**1. The two men are sinners:** Do not think that they are the only robbers and thieves. They are not the only criminals and wicked, the only rebellious, the only corrupted and liars, or the only faithless. We are the same. Tell me, who among us did not put His hand on things not belonging to him? We may have stolen other people’s money, time, work, fame, position, relation, authority, or have snatched their belongings away. Who among us did not fall into immoral act, or a lustful thought to a man or woman? Who among us did not break a law, rebel against authority, or violated a rule. Who among us did not speak lie or deviate the truth? Who among us did not play politics, did not seek his benefit and forsake others? The list is long and frankly speaking, me and you, and the whole world share the same guilt with those men who were crucified along with Jesus.

**2. The two men are crucified:** Both men were hanged on the cross by nails and tied by ropes as the punishment and consequence of their wrong doing. They were dying with humiliation. We too are being crucified by our sin. Our bodies are captive by the act of the sinful nature. We are afflicted, mocked, and most of the time we suffer because of the fruit of our sins. We are pressed by the demands of this world. We are enticed by what surround us from vanish beauty and meaningless wealth. At times our eyes are fixed to the worldly pleasures, then spontaneously we are bound to them and afterwards we suffer and receive all the consequences.

**3. The two men saw the notice over the cross of Jesus:** Which read, “This is the king...” The information that Jesus being the Saviour and King is given with equal chance for all the world to know about Jesus. The Gospel was preached to those robbers and even given a just opportunity to know Christ before their death. They were both sinners and both saw or heard about Jesus. *But they were dissimilar from each other:*

\* **One admitted that he is a sinner while the other is not:** This represents the people of the world who believe that human is sinful from birth and cannot stand in front of God by his deeds. They are humble and fear God. They easily confess their sins and they repent. They respond quickly to the word preached to them: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”** And they delight in the verse, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1John1:9)** But the other part of the world is self righteous, arrogant and proud. There are people who do not see themselves as sinners, and they are reluctant to come to Jesus and repent.

\* **One recognized Jesus as sinless while the other not:** One fact we should accept, that no one is without sin even the kings and the prophets. Only Jesus alone is without sin. We are all sinners and we need a savior. **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by this grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” (Romans3:23-24)**

\* **One saw Jesus as the Messiah, the anointed One of God, but the other did not:** Jesus came to the world to save people from sin. The mission of Jesus is not only to give material things and to perform physical achievement. But His main concern is to save souls from the eternal punishment. One of the thieves recognized that, but the other did not. He evaluated Jesus as a King according to the standard of this world. He did not grasp Jesus’ divine nature, therefore he said, **“Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourselves and save us!”** But the task of Jesus is not to bring us down from the cross. He is not concerned to save our body but to save our soul. He allows us to be there on the cross for a while so that we may recognize ourselves as a sinner. One thief feared God and expressed his desire to be with Christ, and the Lord promised him His Kingdom, while the other was unbelieving, a thief who died as thief.

**My dear and beloved:** Me and you being a sinner, a thief, a robber, or criminal, these facts we cannot deny. But the wise thing is to do the same as the believing thief did; to confess our sins to God and humbly ask Jesus: **“Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”** And surely, the Lord welcomes us by this, **‘I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.’** Before we die on the cross of this world, with faith and conviction, let us pray and say.

**My Prayer:** *Father in Heaven, I come to you as sinner. Please forgive me my sins, and accept me today in your kingdom. Today, I take Jesus as my Lord and King. Lord Jesus, come renew me by the power of Your Word, and by the power of Your Spirit reign over my life in Jesus name, Amen.*