

## MESSAGE OUTLINE

### Invited: A Life-Changing Invitation from Jesus The Thief on the Cross: "Be With Me"

#### Luke 23:32-43 (NIV)

<sup>32</sup> Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

<sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

<sup>35</sup> 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."

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

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

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

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

<sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

#### NOTES:

### Setting the Scene: Crucifixion, Criminals, and Jesus

- o <sup>32</sup> Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. <sup>33</sup> 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.

### "Jesus, remember Me" (Deuteronomy 5:15, Psalm 25:6, Psalm 106:4)

- o <sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

"The thief asks Jesus to be remembered in his kingdom. Surveying the scene at 'the place of the Skull', we find not the slightest shred of evidence that such a kingdom exists, ever has existed, or ever will exist. The thief asks nonetheless. Somehow he has found the lens that permits him to recognize salvation that intrudes into the absolutely hopeless moment where no one is saved from suffering and death, which is also exactly the moment when salvation breaks through." Patrick J. Willson, *Feasting on the Word, Year C*

### An Unexpected Invitation, a Promise, an Embrace

- o <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

"At the heart of the cross is Christ's stance of not letting the other remain an enemy and of creating space in himself for the offender to come in... The arms of the crucified are open—a sign of space in God's self and an invitation for the enemy to come in." -Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*

"In obedience to the call 'to embrace each other' the Paschal mystery is lived out in the world. We who have been embraced by the outstretched arms of the crucified God open our arms even for the enemies—to make space in ourselves for them and invite them in—so that together we may rejoice in the eternal embrace of the triune God." -Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*

#### NOTES:

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

October 12, 2025

*As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at [solanabeach.church](http://solanabeach.church) for sermon video, message outline, resources and small group questions print version.*

### CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Before beginning your time in the message and scripture passage, consider asking each person to share a word or phrase that best describes their day.

**CONNECT WITH GOD** *(Select one of the below practices or choose a practice from a different week.)*

- **Attending to God through Art**

*Alone:* Using the artwork *At the Cross* by Gail Steel, highlighted on Sunday, October 12th ([solanabeach.church/invited-series-artwork](http://solanabeach.church/invited-series-artwork)), spend quiet time reflecting and journaling on what you see in the piece. Pray that God quiets the many distractions within you and beyond you in order to focus on the gift of this artwork before you. As you focus on the art, you might journal your reflections to the following questions: How am I responding to this piece today? What feelings, hopes, longing, or even conviction does this stir in me?

- **Prayers of Intercession**

**"I look at God, I look at you, and I keep looking at God."**  
-Julian of Norwich

*Alone:* As you sit in stillness in God's presence, be attentive to who the Holy Spirit is bringing into your heart and mind. As they come to mind, pray for them. It's okay if you don't know what to pray for. It is enough to hold that person in love before God, trusting in God's care for them.

*Journal:* If needed, journal your prayers, thoughts, or feelings as you pray for others.

### TIME FOR PERSONAL AND SHARED REFLECTION

- **Together** or in **smaller groups:** Pray and Read Luke 23:32-43
- **Alone:** Read Luke 23:32-43 again. Offer an extended time for personal, quiet reflection. Reflect/journal on one or more of the following prompts:
  - How do you come to this passage today?
  - What comes to your mind when you think about forgiveness?
  - How have you experienced the embrace of God?
- **Together:** in pairs or smaller groups: Share your reflections from your time of journaling. Remember to listen with intentionality, and resist the temptation to fix or give advice.

### CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE

If needed, read the passage again. Then select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.

- Review the sermon outline.
- Which part of the sermon feels most applicable to your life?
- Did anything surprise you in the passage or in the message?
- Share with one another what you notice about the themes of invitation in this passage.
- What do you notice or imagine is happening at "the place called the Skull"?
- How do the two thieves respond to Jesus differently?
- Consider the theme of *remembering* throughout the Bible. How does this support you as you explore the encounter between Jesus and the thief?
- What does this passage teach you?
- How does this story challenge or encourage you to embrace like Jesus does?

### ENGAGE AND EXPLORE

Together: explore the quote below from the message outline, in connection with the passage and the themes of invitation throughout this series.

"In obedience to the call 'to embrace each other' the Paschal mystery is lived out in the world. We who have been embraced by the outstretched arms of the crucified God open our arms even for the enemies—to make space in ourselves for them and invite them in—so that together we may rejoice in the eternal embrace of the triune God." -Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*

### PRAYER

In pairs, pray that you remember the Savior who embraces you and calls you beloved. Then, pray for those who are difficult for you to pray for: pray with humility and wonder that despite the cruelty around us, and despite our own limits on who belongs, Jesus is always redrawing the dividing lines and welcoming the most unexpected people.