

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends
God Is Stranger: Jesus and the Stranger, July 7, 2019

The Big Idea

The way the cross is used in worship and as a Christian symbol is strange when you consider that it was the instrument that was used to torture and kill Jesus. And yet the cross has taken on greater and more powerful meaning in light of Jesus' death. Jesus dying on the cross is the epitome of divine hospitality –letting strangers in at all costs.

Where we are in the Bible

Each Gospel has its own version of the variety of events leading to Jesus' death and resurrection. If a Gospel writer included a detail, it was done so in order that the reader would believe. In Luke's version of Jesus' death (Luke 23:32-43), we find a powerful piece describing the two thieves that were executed on both sides of Jesus.

Other scriptures to consider

Luke 7:28-35...Jesus' friends.
Revelation 13:8...God's plan all along.
Isaiah 53:3...the suffering servant.
John 14...In my Father's house
Psalm 31:1-5...David's prayer that
Jesus repeats on the cross.

Finding a bit of ourselves

- After reading Luke 23:32-43, list the differences between the two thieves, both in their interactions with Jesus and their attitudes.
- Discuss or reflect on your understanding of "entitlement." What do you deserve in life and why? How are your expectations formed by your answer?
- Discuss or reflect on the doctrine of "Original Sin" as explained in Romans 5:12-14. How does being connected to the sins of Adam make sense to you, and where does it not make sense?
- Do you consider yourself a "thief on the cross"? Why or why not?

Where do we go from here?

- The second thief provides an example of true confession. Is confession a regular part of your prayer life?
- Jesus promised the second thief that he would be with him in paradise, highlighting that heaven is just as much, if not more, about reconciliation than it is about living forever. In what ways have Christians over-emphasized their own personal ticket to paradise and under-emphasized reconciliation with God?
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. What does the 'Ministry of Reconciliation' look like in practical terms? How can you be more of an 'Ambassador for Christ'?

Prayer focus

As you reflect on the cross, spend some time in confession of your sins and your need for Christ's salvation in...

- your relationships.
- your attitudes.
- your behaviors.
- your hurts, habits, and hang-ups.
- your inactions.

Next, in a full trust in God's grace from the cross of Christ, thank Him for forgiveness and restoration.



friends church
Willoughby Hills