



This week we studied the second words of Jesus on the cross. Luke 23:43 – “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise”. We began by thinking about the struggles we can have with God’s grace; either accepting it ourselves, as we like to earn things, or disagreeing with the worthiness of others who receive it. Grace can seem unfair. But first we thought about what the Bible teaches about Paradise

What is Paradise?

The word heaven is found all over the Bible but Jesus said ‘Paradise’ which only comes up three times in the New Testament. Paradise means park, or Eden. Apart from Luke 23, we learn from Paul about it in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. Jesus mentions it again in Revelation 2:7. Paradise is heaven but it is also the new earth where the tree of life is and where we will be with Jesus forever

Paradise will be full of sinners

Both criminals speak to Jesus on the cross. One mocks him the other asks for mercy. They are both armed robbers worthy of Roman execution for rebelling. However, Jesus welcomes one of the criminals into Paradise. Luke’s gospel is full of examples of ‘sinners’ who are welcomed by Jesus. These are the people he came for.

Paradise is a gift through faith

Jesus welcomes sinners but through his death they are cleansed from their sin. Not because of works or through proving their faith with an obedient life but purely through trusting in the gift of God’s grace won for us by Jesus on the cross.

Here are some questions to get some discussion and application going...

What do you think of when you hear stories of ‘very bad’ people becoming Christians? What is your initial response to this criminal receiving grace right before he dies? Does grace ever seem unfair?

What would be your dream Paradise?

What is the stereotypical image of what heaven is like?

What does the Bible teach about Paradise? (2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Revelation 2:7; 22:11-5 for Tree of life quotes)

Compare and contrast the criminals, their views of Jesus and their response to him.

What other examples do we get in Luke’s gospel of Jesus welcoming in the outcasts (Luke 2:8ff; 7:36-50; 19:1-9) Who might be the outcasts in our society?

What were the religious leaders reaction to the people Jesus hung out with? (mark 2:13-17)

Why can’t you get to haven through good works?

What are the entry requirements? What three things did the criminal do/say? Find them in the passage. Cross ref: Romans 10:9-10. Any other passages?

What does it mean ‘to remember’ in the Bible? (Samson, Hannah, Israel)

Does grace by faith ever make you uncomfortable without any works to prove it? Can this ever be an appropriate concern?

What is the correct relationship between good works and faith?

How should we respond to grace in our own lives and the lives of other people?