

SEVEN WORDS DEVOTIONAL - WEEK 2

Mile 2 - "A Trail of SALVATION"

43 And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."
Luke 23:43 (NLT)

DAY 8

Individual Reflection

Prayer of Preparation

Heavenly Father,

I offer you my life today. Help me to slow down and listen to You. Please speak into my very being whatever you want me to hear today and transform me more into your likeness from our time spent together. Help me to be obedient to follow through with whatever you ask of me. Amen.

Statement from the Cross #2

Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43

Thoughts of a Fellow Sojourner

I remember as a little boy scouring through back alleys and ditches with my friends in search of aluminum cans, but we were less concerned with recycling than we were with the thought of redemption. We knew that the grocery store would give us money for our cans. As an adult, another group of friends taught me that the business of "scrapping" discarded items could be quite lucrative and rewarding. The key is finding the items that people are looking for. There are scrap metal plants and vintage clothing stores that offer "scrappers" pretty fair return for their finds. However, the real reward comes through finding a unique item that someone is specifically looking for. The people who "scrap" for these items are usually found combing through yard sales or thrift stores. They tend to keep a list of items that people are searching for. One of the most common of these tends to be someone who owned something earlier in life and is now looking to reacquire it. They have either lost it, had it stolen, or perhaps it was thrown out or given away by mistake. No matter the case, these "collectors" are the ones who are willing to pay whatever it takes to buy back that which they previously owned.

On the Cross, Jesus hung between two criminals. Most of us would have seen them as two men who were simply getting what they deserved. We really don't know a lot about their story, but Jesus did. He knew all about them. For, he had been searching for them for a very long time. You see, Jesus is the ultimate "collector." Since Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, a plan was set in motion that would redeem or "buy back" God's most treasured creation...humanity. Little did the criminals know that while Jesus was being crucified there between the two of them, He was actually paying the price to redeem all of humanity, even the two of them. When Jesus heard the words, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom," his heart must've just about burst. More than any "collector" who had ever been reunited with a lost treasure that had cost him so much to regain, Jesus looked into the man's eyes and saw the very reason he was paying such high a price. With eyes on his precious treasure, he answered him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." The man had been redeemed.

Moment of Reflection

Take some time in silence for reflection, meditation, or simply to listen to what God wants to speak into you.

Written Response

Close your time by writing to God a response or plan for application.

Prayer of Consummation

Lord Jesus,

In our self-imposed blindness we are lost people; Yet You, the Ultimate Collector, passionately pursue us;

In doing so, You have paid the most costly price that we might return to You. Thank you Jesus for Your act of redemption on the cross.

Teach us how we can take part in Your reconciling of the lost to You;

Lead us where reconciliation and redemption are most needed;

Open our eyes to whom we may reach out to in Your name;

Amen.

DAY 9

Individual Reflection

Lectio Divina:

1. Read Luke 23:39-43 slowly a few times (Lectio)

39 *One of the criminals hanging there made fun of Jesus. He said, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself! Save us!"* **40** *But the other criminal scolded him. "Don't you have any respect for God?" he said. "Remember, you are under the same sentence of death. 41 We are being punished fairly. We are getting just what our actions call for. But this man hasn't done anything wrong."* **42** *Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."* **43** *Jesus answered him, "What I'm about to tell you is true. Today you will be with me in paradise."*

2. Ponder the text (Meditatio)

What is a fair punishment for my sins?

Did Jesus deserve punishment?

What does Jesus mean when he says something is true? What is paradise?

3. Speak to God (Oratio)

Lord, I believe you. I may not have all the answers, but I trust that you do. Even though I have not yet seen paradise, I know it will be glorious because you will be there. Thank you that you took my place for punishment of my sins. Thank you for purchasing me from death and hell. The love you showed me on the cross beckons me closer to you. Even though I long for paradise, I am content in you in the here and now.

4. Find a quiet place (Contemplatio)

I love to be in your presence.

I love that your Truth has changed me from the inside out. Even though I could stay here in this solitude with you,

I know your love compels me to bring your love to others. How can I do that?
Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

DAY 10

Individual Application

Intro:

The application today is all about redemption. Redemption is a key aspect of the message of “Seven.”

Without redemption none of this means anything. Redemption is the gift that Jesus offers. It is the key to the gates of the kingdom. Everything else revolves around this.

Items needed:

A Mirror

Directions:

There is something to be said about hearing that we have received redemption. One way we can do that is to speak it to ourselves. Most of us, whether we like it or not, usually have some kind of dialogue running in our head. Yes, that means that we talk to ourselves. However, when you look at someone and hear them offer a verbal form of redemption to you, it has a much different effect. So, here’s what we want you to do: look at yourself in the mirror, make eye contact with yourself, and say:

“I am a child of the most high God. I live in the unshakeable kingdom God and because of that I am a new creation, the old has gone, and the new has come. God has redeemed me and because of that, today I am new.”

Repeat it a couple of times if you need or want to until it really sinks in.

DAY 11

Individual Prayer Guide

Luke 23:43 - *“And Jesus replied, ‘I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.’”*

Paradise is a powerful word. When we think of paradise we usually think of a warm beach, or maybe a cabin in the mountains. Whatever the case paradise is something that we all seek and it meant the same thing to the thief on the cross that it means to all of us. The word Jesus uses,

παραδείσω, meant one specific thing to the people of the time. Somewhere better than earth, most assuredly to Jesus and to all of us, it means heaven. As Christians we believe that the only way to get into heaven is to accept the gift of redemption that Jesus offers us.

With his one his last breathes Jesus offered this man that gift and with what I am sure was one the thief's last breathes, he gladly accepted and affirmed his belief in Jesus. He accepted the redemption, he recognized that no matter what he had done, Jesus still loved him and as result of that love nothing else mattered. He was redeemed, saved, and made new. We all have the option to embrace the same gift, it's free, and it is the greatest gift the world has ever seen. The question is do we embrace it?

Prayer:

Salvation is a free gift that Jesus extends to every person who ever lived. We just have to be willing to reach out and take it. It may seem difficult at first, but what ultimately happens is we embrace Jesus and in turn embrace paradise. This prayer is one way we can engage with the offer of Jesus.

1. Sit in silence really focus on the Lord's presence. He is in the room with you right now.
2. Acknowledge him and thank him for the gift of life.
3. Picture yourself being there, as Jesus promises the man just before he dies, that he will be in paradise. Contemplate to yourself, is this something you too would like to hear?
4. If it is, embrace it. Ask Jesus to let you in. This could mean a number of different things. Maybe you ask Jesus into your life for the first time, Maybe you decide to re-up on our commitment, Maybe you ask him to redeem a specific part of your life. Whatever that looks like for you, take the step and go for it.
5. After taking action, again thank Jesus for his gift.
6. Take a moment in silence. Embrace the thought that you will be in paradise, a place better than earth, with Jesus. Then go on about your day.

DAY 12

Individual Reflection

Read Romans 3:22-25b slowly a few times (Lectio)

22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

2. Ponder the text (Meditatio)

What words jump out at me?

How does the text make me feel?
What thoughts enter my mind about my new life in Him?

3. Speak to God (Oratio)

Jesus, I hear You calling me. I feel You loving me. I know about Your ultimate sacrifice for me. I come to You just as I am and with all that I am. My sins violated the Father and I am so sorry. I repent of them and ask Your forgiveness.

I love You because You are Love Itself and You loved me first.

I surrender my entire self and respond gratefully to Your invitation to live in You and have You live in me, now and forever. I pledge to You and announce to all that You are my Savior, Redeemer, Friend, Master and High Priest. Cover me with Your redemptive blood and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Heal and transform me from being darkness to being light, the light of the world.

I am willing to let Your Spirit take over every part of me and pray for Your grace to help me let go of self-indulgence, self-promotion, self-interest and rather make You the center of my life and complete obedience to You, as Your servant, my passion. I know Your friends are to be my friends, and Your enemies are to be my own. Your ways will be mine. I know You will discipline me for my own spirit's sake. I accept all this while I embrace You and am nurtured by Your infinite love and mercy and sustained by my complete faith and trust in You, in the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Come Lord Jesus, live in me as I live in You. I love You. I will follow You every day of my life, a life without end. Thank you for loving me into Your kingdom! Amen.

-Taken from prayergear.com

4. Find a quiet place (Contemplatio)

Be still and listen for God's voice

What is He saying to me about redemption?

What is He saying to me about my new life in Him?

Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.

DAY 13

Individual Application

Intro:

Keeping with our theme of "go." Today's exercise is designed to get you out and engaging with the topic of redemption. In the first application exercise, you offered redemption to yourself by speaking it over yourself. Today, we are going to take that a step farther.

Items needed:

A Partner

Directions:

Today, we would like you to use a variation of the same phrase you used in the first “redemption” exercise, only this time, we want you to use a partner and speak it over each other. Make sure you do this with someone you trust and can be authentic with. Sit or stand across from one another and take turns saying this to each other at least one time.

“You are a child of the most high God. You live in the unshakeable kingdom God and because of that you are a new creation, the old has gone, and the new has come. God has redeemed you and because of that, today you are new.”

DAY 14**Group Study****How’d It Go?** (In groups of 2-3)

How did you get to apply what you learned about forgiveness this past week?

Warming Up

1. Do you ever catch yourself judging or evaluating people who come into your church or fellowship by how they look or what their life appears like?
2. Do you remember what it felt like when you began your relationship with Jesus?

Digging In

“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” - Luke 23:43

In one of His final interactions, Jesus extended eternal life. As he openly forgave others, Jesus sparked an internal transformation in the criminal next to Him. Our Savior did not allow His own suffering and torment to distract Him from the cries of faith from a repentant sinner. Just as He was not too preoccupied to minister to this criminal, He is never too busy for our concerns. The two criminals that hung on the crosses on either side of Jesus had very different attitudes.

3. Why do you think the one chose to insult and mock Him?
4. Why do you think the other chose to reprimand him for his insults?
5. What was his basis for reprimanding the other thief?
6. On what basis do you think he asked, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom?”
7. What were any criteria that Jesus placed on him before telling Him that he would be joining Him in paradise? (i.e. — confessing his sins, etc...)]

8. How do you think Jesus felt when the thief made his request?

9. What do suppose Jesus wanted us to learn from this unconventional conversation?

Close in Prayer

Take turns asking God to help you remember that you, like the thief, have done nothing to earn or deserve this amazing gift of relationship with the Living God. Ask Him to help you remember this when you begin to feel judgmental about others that seem undeserving of His gift.