



Sermon Notes

Term - Spring

Series - Building to Easter

Gathering & Date - 5, 25th March 2018

Title - The welcome of God's grace

Preacher - Chris Brown

Reading - Luke 23:26-56

Main message of this talk in one sentence -

At the place of Golgotha we see the kingdom of God and meet the welcome of God's grace in the words "Father, forgive".

Main points -

The Jewish people were looking for a conquering king who would free them from Roman oppression. At Golgotha, the king they longed for is nailed to a cross; to the human eye it seems as if Rome and the Religious elite have triumphed. Their horizon was the world they inhabited, God's horizon is eternity. Most people only saw Jesus the man, only a few saw Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is the conquering king, he's not come to fight Rome, he's come to defeat sin and death, his victory has eternal significance for the whole world.

The Gospels record seven times when Jesus spoke whilst nailed to the cross. We are focusing on the three sayings recorded in Luke. Each one provides a glimpse into the kingdom of Heaven.

"Father, forgive them..." (v. 34) Against the backdrop of the brutality of the Roman legal system and the corruption and power seeking of the religious elite, Jesus declares the way of justice in the kingdom of Heaven. God has revealed himself in Jesus as Emmanuel (God with us) and here he is taking the sin of the world upon his shoulders, to defeat it once and for all. On the basis of that victory, forgiveness is available to all, not because of what they have done, but because of what God has done. This is the welcome of God's grace, available to all who will follow Jesus.

"...you will be with me in paradise..." (v. 43) The interaction between Jesus and the two criminals crucified beside him shows us how to receive God's forgiveness. One rejects Jesus, the other sees that Jesus is not only a man, he is also God. His words "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." reveal that he desires to be near to Jesus, that he has glimpsed the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus response is breathtaking. God's grace is available to all, no matter who we are, or what we've done. We fix our gaze upon Jesus, follow Jesus with our lives and we will walk in the fullness of God's grace.

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (v. 46) Here we glimpse the inner relationship of the one true God, Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus - God the Son - places his spirit, his life, into the hands of God the Father. When we draw near to Jesus, our lives are placed into the hands of God. This is the place our lives are designed to be, it is the place where we find fullness of life.

When we choose to follow Jesus we become citizens of heaven. From that point forward our eternal destiny is with God. We still have a choice to make each day or even each moment of the day as we face different situations in day to day life. That choice is "Will I draw near to or draw away from Jesus?" We draw near to Jesus by being in his presence and worshiping him. Even if we have made poor choices and drawn away from Jesus, when we turn and draw near to Jesus, God, by his grace welcomes us and calls us to come close.

We don't mend our own brokenness so that we can walk with Jesus. We walk with Jesus so that he can mend our brokenness.

For further thought and prayer -

- Read one or more of the accounts of Jesus death (Matt 27:32-66; Mark 15:21-47; Luke 23:26-56; John 19:16-42) and prayerfully reflect on where the divinity of Jesus is revealed and where the kingdom of Heaven is declared.
- How do you receive God's forgiveness? Are you certain that God has forgiven you?
- How can you draw near to Jesus this week?
- Are you certain of your eternal destiny?
- Do you think of yourself as a citizen of heaven?
- How does your day to day life reflect your heavenly citizenship?