



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Luke Sermon Series  
Supports Session 11: Sacrificed  
Sermon Title: "The Unlikely Convert"  
Passage: Luke 23:26-43

---

### Connection to Luke 23

The first 25 verses of chapter 23 contain the account of Jesus' farcical trial before Pilate. Convinced that Jesus was an innocent man, Pilate tried to release Him, but the chief priests, the leaders, and the people demanded Jesus' crucifixion. Verses 26-43, in brief fashion, describe Jesus' crucifixion alongside two criminals.

### Introduction/Opening

During Jesus' earthly ministry, most of the people who followed Him were unlikely candidates. It wasn't the religious or righteous that trusted Him. Jesus' converts were women of questionable background, hated tax collectors, social outcasts such as lepers, and despised Roman centurions. These people were all unlikely converts, but the most unlikely candidate was a man being crucified alongside of Jesus. From his brief interaction with Jesus and his bold request of Him, we learn what must happen to be saved.

### Outline

1. To be saved we must recognize who Jesus is (vv. 32, 41-42).
  - a. The Bible doesn't state much about the two thieves, but verse 32 does say, "Two others—criminals—were also led away to be executed with him." So, as these two made the march through the streets of Jerusalem to Golgotha they heard and saw everything Jesus said and experienced. What they heard and experienced was enough information for one of the two to understand who Jesus really was and make the right decision.
  - b. They learned that Jesus:
    1. Cared about people (vv. 27-30). As Jesus made His way through the streets, the crowds wept and lamented. In v. 28 Jesus encouraged them to stop weeping for Him, but instead to weep for themselves because of the impending judgment. The criminals heard Jesus caring for the people instead of Himself.
    2. Provided forgiveness for people (v. 34). Since Romans could not be executed by crucifixion, the criminals were most likely Jews. Consequently, when they heard Jesus, in verse 34, say, "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing," they would have understood Jesus claiming to be the Messiah who could forgive sins.
    3. Was the sinless sacrifice (v. 41). In his defense of Jesus, the dying thief affirmed the sinlessness of Jesus.

- c. The truth the criminal knew was enough to convince him that Jesus really was the Messiah, so he cried out, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!” (Luke 23:42)
  - d. With a complete canon of Scripture and 2000 years of church history, people today have full knowledge of who Jesus is and must call on Him to be saved.
2. To be saved, we must realize what we are (vv. 40-41).
- a. If the criminal was nothing else, he was honest. To his fellow criminal, about both of them he said, “Don't you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment? We are punished justly, because we're getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong” (Luke 23:40-41).
  - b. The Bible doesn't state specifically what crime the two men had committed, but that doesn't matter. The remorseful criminal fully recognized he was guilty and deserved to die.
  - c. In much the same way, any person who is to be saved must recognize he or she is a guilty sinner (Rom. 3:23) who deserves to die (Rom. 6:23).
3. To be saved we must request what we need (v. 42).
- a. With a bold faith the criminal asked for what he needed: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!” (Luke 23:42)
  - b. His request proves he understood two important truths:
    - 1. He couldn't help himself because he was hanging on a cross.
    - 2. He needed eternal life. At this point in the day, as Jesus was about to die, the thief knew Jesus' kingdom wasn't earthly, but eternal. He knew he needed to be a part of Jesus' eternal kingdom.
  - c. For all who recognize who Jesus is, realize who they are, and request what they need, they will be saved. Paul stated, “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

## Conclusion

Now here is what is fascinating about this story. It is a story that from an earthly perspective ended poorly; the thief died. From an eternal perspective, however, it ended happily ever after. One request changed everything for the thief as Jesus declared that the thief had a place with Jesus in paradise.

Can you relate? Can you identify with the thief? Do you need and want eternal life? Then simply ask by faith, “Jesus, remember me; save me.”

---

*Michael Priest lives in Memphis where he has served as pastor of Bartlett Baptist Church for the last 18 years. He has been married to the former Carolyn Leone for 35 years, and they have 4 adult sons, Jonathan, Caleb, David, and Matthew, 2 daughters-in-law, Alex and Rachel, and 1 granddaughter, Cylah. He earned his Bachelor of Arts from Blue Mountain College and both his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an avid rock and mountain climber.*

*All Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible, Copyright 2020 by Holman Bible Publishers.*