

# “That Day, and Today” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent Midweek 5 March 20, 2024

- I. **Luke 23:26-43** – Previously read
- II. **Evil is often louder than good.**
  - a. You’ve probably heard the saying for news reports – “If it bleeds, it leads.”
    - i. In other words, things like accidents, shootings, and assaults are often the main story in newscasts because it catches our attention.
    - ii. Evil leads the way.... it seems like evil is louder than good.
  - b. Another example is criticism... ouch.
    - i. How long does a negative comment stay with us?
    - ii. Criticism tends to be far more powerful or “louder” than any compliment we might receive.
    - iii. Complaints, insults, or criticism will bounce around in our heads for years... or even a lifetime... while any words of affirmation or kindness fade away in no time.
    - iv. It’s sad, but many people are carrying around a giant load of criticisms and negative comments from the past... and it plays in our heads when we aren’t even aware of it.
      1. The other sad part about these negative thoughts is the person who passed them along to us probably has no idea that it made such an impact... and, they are carrying around their own load of negative feedback!
  - c. Again... evil is often louder than good.
- III. **In our reading from Luke 23, evil is certainly loud.**
  - a. Throughout the last several weeks, we have a regular source of the evil coming at Jesus, and it’s the “rulers”, or the members of the Sanhedrin.
    - i. Our reading says they “scoffed” at Jesus on the cross.
      1. You might get the sense that that it was a single event – they scoffed – however, it’s more like they were continually scoffing, ridiculing... they wouldn’t let up.
      2. Just like evil won’t let up, and it keeps getting louder and louder.
        - a. It’s not like Jesus wasn’t already beaten bloody and nailed to a cross, now these men are ridiculing Him while He’s dying.
          - i. That can only be described as evil.
      3. The funny thing is that without even realizing it, they say things that are true about Jesus as He hangs on the cross!
        - a. Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ... Jesus is God’s chosen one.
        - b. However, He’s not there to save Himself or get down off the cross (even though He certainly could have done that

if He wanted to) but He's there to die for all people and their sins.

c. The rulers are blind when it comes to seeing Jesus for who He is, so they scoff and ridicule... as the evil was louder than the good.

b. And then there are the soldiers...

i. The troops directed by the Roman government... the ones who carry out the execution of Jesus and the other two criminals.

ii. They do the dirty work of nailing these men to their crosses and lifting them up for the crowds to see.

iii. And they post the charge against Jesus above His head, "King of the Jews."

iv. It doesn't matter that Jesus is the only perfect and innocent man to ever live... these soldiers have a job to do.

v. But it doesn't stop with just doing their job, they also decide to make fun of a dying man...

1. "Don't kings know how to take care of themselves? If You're the king of the Jews... like the sign says... then save Yourself!"

2. Laughing, mocking, insulting.

3. Evil was really loud that day.

c. And it doesn't stop with the rulers or the soldiers, because even one of the criminals uses his last bit of life to rail at Jesus too.

i. He blasphemes Him, and like the Sanhedrin, he keeps on doing it with everyone else... "Aren't You the Christ? Well, aren't you? Do something!"

ii. You have to wonder how the rulers and the soldiers reacted when one of the men who was dying beside Jesus joined in mocking Him.

iii. Every bit of dignity had been stripped from Jesus... including His clothing... and now even a criminal is making fun of Him.

d. Again, the evil voices coming at Jesus were loud.

IV. **However, a single voice cuts through the evil that day.**

a. Rather than blindness and hatred and mocking, he speaks honesty... and truth... and hope.

b. The believing criminal is a strange light in the darkness, and an example of faith even when evil is so loud all around him.

i. No one else seems to get a reaction from Jesus... but Jesus answers this man... and gives him a gift.

c. Also known as the "thief on the cross" – which is just an assumption, because we don't really know what he did to get the death penalty... but this dying man decides to speak out with good.

i. He starts by calling out the other criminal for berating Jesus... "Don't you fear God?" "Look—you and I are dying here because we deserve what we are getting. But this man has done nothing wrong!"

- d. Then he says something that needs to be highlighted... “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”
- e. These words are a statement of faith...
  - i. Does this guy know who Jesus is? Has he heard about Him before this point in time? We don't know.
  - ii. What we do know is that Jesus has a way of bringing about faith in the most unlikely of people – for example the centurion whose servant was healed, or Zacchaeus the tax collector in Jericho.
  - iii. In this dying man came a statement of faith – “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”
- f. Somehow this man knows the truth...
  - i. All the evil that's surrounding Jesus and destroying Him, doesn't keep this criminal from believing that Jesus really is the King.
  - ii. And if Jesus is the King of kings, then there is hope.
  - iii. If Jesus is the true Messiah, then a day will come when evil loses... when satan and sin are defeated.
  - iv. A day in the future... a hope for more than what he is experiencing on the cross – the criminal sees that Day to come... in hope.
- g. But there is more to the story than just a statement of faith.
  - i. Jesus answers him... and just like Zacchaeus, Jesus uses a word to announce God's plan... “today.”
  - ii. Jesus tells Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house,” (Luke 19:9) and to the criminal who believes on the cross Jesus says, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”
- h. Even if we don't make it another day in this world, we have the same promise – the moment of our death, we will be with our Savior in paradise.
  - i. The promise of eternal life and rest is ours, just as much as it was for the dying man on the cross who believed Jesus was His Savior.
  - ii. We are completely secure in our Savior, because He gives us the hope for a day when all things will be redeemed and restored, and a promise that even if we die right now, we are with Him in paradise.

V. **Evil is doing its best to sow the seeds of unbelief and hopelessness.**

- a. Evil gets very loud and tries to drown out your faith... it seems like the thing that gets the most attention in our lives.
  - i. There are many people in our world who still mock and scoff at Jesus and His followers.
- b. Don't let those evil voices overcome the good... the Truth.
  - i. We have a living hope... we have faith that Jesus won the victory when He rose from the dead... and we know that evil has no real power over us.
  - ii. We hear the voice of faith long ago and say the same words... “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

iii. And we know without a doubt, that evil will be swallowed up by the good... and as He has claimed us as His own, He will remember us on that day. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sermon based on: "You Meant It for Evil, but God Meant It for Good: An Ash Wednesday through Easter Sunday Sermon Series Based on the Gospel of Luke", Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs, Concordia Seminary Publishing, St. Louis, 2022