

### TAKEAWAY:

The cross teaches humility, forgiveness, and trust, which can shape daily life.

### INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- What does it mean to you personally that Jesus chose to die on the cross for you?
- What is one situation where you felt overwhelmed, and who or what did you turn to for support during that time?

### UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read Luke 23:32-43

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- How does Jesus demonstrate concern for other people? What response would you expect in these circumstances from an ordinary human being?
- How does the scene at the cross, where Jesus is crucified alongside criminals, illustrate the belief in Jesus' role as the ultimate atonement for sin? What does this passage reveal about redemption and grace offered to all, regardless of past transgressions?
- In Luke 23:42-43, the criminal acknowledges Jesus' kingship, asking to be remembered in His kingdom. How does this interaction reflect teachings on the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom and the immediate assurance of salvation through faith, rather than works?

### APPLICATION:

- Identify one relationship where forgiveness or humility is needed. Take one concrete step toward reconciliation this week.
- Choose one area where you will practice "cross-carrying" this week—putting others first, sacrificing comfort, or serving without recognition.

### GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

**Forgiveness:** J. I. Packer states, "Forgiveness is pardon in a personal setting. It is taking back into friendship those who went against you, hurt you, and put themselves in the wrong with you. It is

compassionate... and, inevitably, costly. God's forgiveness is the supreme instance of this, for it is God in love restoring fellowship at the cost of the cross." Relatedly, he states, "Adoption is the highest privilege of the gospel [where the] traitor is forgiven, brought in for supper, and given the family name."

- When we are called to forgive others "as Christ forgave us" (Eph 4:32), what is asked of us in terms of specific actions, costs, or inconveniences? In what ways might this also mean overcoming our natural desire for retaliation?
- In modern culture, we often equate forgiveness with "moving on" or simply letting go of anger. Why is, as Packer states, "restoring fellowship" more powerful and difficult than simply offering a legal pardon or choosing to ignore a transgression? How does the higher goal of restoring friendship increase the difficulty of the task God asks of us when we forgive someone? Why is this restoration essential for the relationship to be creative, real, and life-giving rather than just functional?
- If our model for forgiveness is not just pardon but adoption, how should this change the way we treat someone in our lives who has betrayed our trust? In what ways does adoption, giving them the family name, imply a level of vulnerability that goes beyond simple legal forgiveness?
- In the context of a broken relationship where you have offered forgiveness but have not yet seen restoration, what does it look like to wait on the Lord to bring about this restoration without falling back into a state of ill will or bitterness toward that person?

**The Great Exchange:** Martin Luther's theology was defined by the concept of the "happy exchange," where Christ takes our sin and gives us his righteousness. He viewed Christ on the cross as the ultimate sin-bearer, taking upon himself the specific identities of the thieves and murderers he came to save. Read the following quote from Luther:

- *"All the prophets foresaw that on the cross Jesus became the greatest murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer that there ever was. Our most merciful Father sent his only Son into the world and said to him: Jesus, you will become Peter the denier; you will become Paul that persecutor... you will become David that adulterer; you will become Adam, that sinner... On the cross, he became our sin."*
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:20-21. Ponder what Paul says about Jesus in light of Luther's thoughts. How does this idea of a "happy" or "great exchange" impact the way you think about the death of Jesus?
- For Luther, the "Father, forgive them" prayer was possible because Jesus was being punished *as if* he were those sinners. How does this truth change the way you worship God when thinking about the cross?
- Read this quote from Tim Keller: "On the cross, he became our sin, so that from the cross, he could look out at those who had rejected and failed him and pray: 'Father, forgive them,' He could extend forgiveness to them because he was being punished for them. When you forgive, you let the sting of that person's sin end in you... You absorb the suffering for their sin." When we are called to forgive others "as Christ forgave us" (Eph 4:32), what specific "costs" or "pains" are we being asked to absorb?
- [Watch this video from Glen Scrivener and pay special attention to how he illustrates this "great exchange."](#) How does his analogy of a prince and a pauper help to illuminate this spiritual truth?

**Quotes:**

- “Christ was not obliged to die, but willingly submitted to death so as to vanquish death by His power: so neither deserved He to be classed with thieves; but willed to be reputed with the ungodly that He might destroy ungodliness by His power.” Thomas Aquinas
- “Let us rest satisfied with knowing that those who are engrafted by faith into the body of Christ are partakers of that life, and thus enjoy after death a blessed and joyful rest, until the perfect glory of the heavenly life is fully manifested by the coming of Christ.” John Calvin
- “He offers him hope! He said to him, ‘Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’... This is the beauty of the gospel. It takes the most hopeless situation, even the warranted crucifixion of a criminal, and offers the very opposite—life.” John Piper
- “The repentant thief doesn't ask to be taken down from the cross.... All that he is concerned about is being right with Jesus. This thief realizes that what he needs is not a change in circumstance but a change in what his life has been centered upon.” Tim Keller
- “This is one of the greatest acts of faith displayed anywhere in God's word. While so many of Christ's disciples had abandoned him.... This criminal believed that a crucified man beside him had a kingdom! The thief was not putting his faith in the resurrected Lord of glory, but in a man under God's curse.” John Piper

## **PRAYER:**

Pray for the courage to forgive as Jesus forgave and for strength to live sacrificially in the small moments of daily life.