

Spiritual Security

Luke 23:27-43 ²⁷ And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. ²⁸ But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ "For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed *are* the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' ³⁰ "Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ³¹ "For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" ³² There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. ³³ And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. ³⁵ And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." ³⁸ And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁹ Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." ⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." ⁴³ And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Some people make the financial mistake of assuming that things will continue as they are or even get better. People get into debt assuming they'll have more money in the future and can pay it off then. Some fail to plan for emergencies assuming they can save for emergencies in the future. Thus, when emergencies happen say a medical problem or a house, they are unprepared. Financial security comes from practicing financial discipline now, saving now, before the emergency comes. It does not come from waiting assuming that thing will be better in the days to come.

Even more unfortunate are the many people who make the same mistake not with their financial security but with their spiritual security. The same way we get comfortable with credit cards and with borrowing money so also, we sometimes get comfortable with our sin, little sins, and big sins. We start thinking, it's not really that big of deal. We start thinking God obviously doesn't really care that much. The bible warns the day of the Lord will come upon such like a thief in the night.

Spiritual security means being aware of our sin, aware of the consequences of that sin, and most importantly aware of the solution to our sin, which is Jesus Christ. This is also called the true fear of God.

Jesus tells the daughters of Jerusalem “the days are coming.” These days that are coming are not happy days that are here to stay. They are days of great distress so that people would chose rather to be buried under mountains.

This day the last Sunday of the church year, we look beyond the end of the church year to the end of the world and the days leading up to that end. As we look towards the end, we want to make sure we are spiritually secure. There is no better place to find both the need and the means for spiritual security than here at the foot of the cross.

As we just sang with the cross, we can go onwards into the “days that will come,” secure with Christ, secure in Christ. The days that are coming are troubled ones, but we find security for those days in Christ Jesus.

The true fear of God is not a staged show of piety.

There are some who think the fear of God is an outward act. The women who are following Jesus are very good at playing the part of weeping and wailing, but they never look at themselves.

Over in the Philippines it has become a custom for people to physically nail themselves to a cross in order to portray Jesus’ crucifixion. Like the women in our text, they know how to put on a good show but such things accomplish little.

Here at church we sometimes have this attitude that the fear of God means, walking quietly in church keeping your kids sitting still etc. These are good things to do but not the true fear of God.

Mothers are sometimes embarrassed that their kids cry in church. We are happy to see and hear children in our church. When they are crying, they are here. It is better to have a crying kid in church than a silent kid outside of church.

When I was in Millston I would sometimes get interrupted by a passing train. No child is anywhere near as loud as that train was.

It is a good idea when your kids are old enough to teach them how to sit still in church, but that is for their sakes now ours. So that they can learn to listen to God’s word in quietness and in humility.

This is not the true fear of God although it may be a good start. And the crucifixions in the Philippines and the weeping of the women are not the true fear of God. The true fear of God is not an outward show, but says Jesus to the women weep for yourselves. The true fear of God is in inwards looking at our own sin.

The true fear of God is not the outward weeping but the examination of my own sin.

There are two men crucified with Jesus. They are often called thieves. But that actual word that is used is Kakourgos. It comes from the Greek word Kaka meaning bad and evil and ourgas meaning to work or do. The word Kaka gives you that idea of something filthy. If we spoke Greek, it would probably be considered a swear word and your parents would wash your mouths with soap if you said it.

What they did was probably a lot worse than simple stealing. They were doers of evil.

In contrast the second thief says of Jesus "He is atopon," that is without sin.

Topon means out of place, unusual, slightly off. The thief says Jesus is "atopon" not out of place or slightly off. There is no blemish in him at all.

A member here told me a few months ago, how when she mops the floor, she keeps moping until the Swiffer sheet comes back clean. Then she knows it is truly clean. That is the sense of atopon, without even a single speck of sin.

The thieves are workers of evil. Jesus is without blemish. Not a single thing out of place.

The second thief sees that. He compares his evil with Jesus perfect innocence. He realizes how great his sin really is. He is not making a big show of weeping but he sees the difference. This is the beginning of the fear of God.

The true fear of God is to take seriously God's condemnation against sin.

Just like we must take our budget seriously if we are to be financially secure so we must take seriously God's condemnation of our sins.

The rulers do not take it seriously they mock Jesus with the words "If you are the Christ, the chosen one."

They more than anyone else should have known that the chosen lamb was chosen to be sacrificed. They themselves were supposed to choose a lamb every year at Passover to be killed. Yet they refuse to recognize Him as Christ even as He is being sacrificed. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus tells the women:

Luke 23:31 if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry

The second thief has a similar reaction, if God's wrath is thus poured out on this man who is atopon, without a blemish, what will happen to me a worker of evil.

The true fear of God is not the weeping of the women but the recognition of the thief, "we indeed justly." My floor is never clean enough for a Swiffer sheet to come back clean. My life is not even close to Jesus' perfect unblemished life.

IF God allowed Jesus to suffer as He did, what will happen to me on the day of judgement unless I hide in Jesus.

The fear of God first takes seriously the consequences of my sin as we see it on the cross, but not to despair but to joy. There in Christ our sins are paid.

But above all **the fear of God is not afraid to approach Christ**. It is afraid of the consequences of our sin, but it is not afraid to draw near to Jesus through whom that sin is washed away.

The rulers of the Jews mock Jesus saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." They admit that He saved others, but rather than grasping this truth with hope, they ridicule Him.

I wonder if the second thief possibly heard this and started thinking about it. "He saved others. Does that mean He possibly even save me?"

In any case this thief is not afraid to approach Jesus and ask, "Lord remember me."

This also is true fear of God, yes to recognize the truth of my sin and its consequences but not so that we are afraid to come to Jesus, rather so that we do flee to the cross of Jesus for refuge.

Two weeks ago, we heard the same thing. We celebrated All Saints Day and were reminded of all those people who died in the Lord, whom the Lord saved. He saved them He can and will save us as He saved this thief.

True fear of God grasps this promise, "He saved others. He can and will save me."

Financial security comes from wise spending and good investments. Spiritual security comes from grasping that cross.

To such who grasp the cross Jesus says "Today you will be with me in paradise." Not to those who put on a good show of weeping. And not to those who don't take seriously their sins. But to those who know God's condemnation and grasp firmly Jesus' promise.

I was surprised at first when I looked at the lectionary earlier this week. I forgot it was Christ the King Sunday and I was expecting something about judgement day, maybe the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Yet, what better way to prepare for the coming of Christ and the days to come than with this reminder that so clearly holds the cross of Christ up. The cross of Christ reminds us how badly we need to be prepared because we see the wrath of God poured out. We see the punishment I deserve. But we also receive here spiritual security knowing that Christ stood in our place.

We are spiritually secure when we hold the cross of Christ. Amen.