

Autumn Communion 2025 - Jesus, remember me

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 September 2025

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Well, please turn with me now to Luke chapter 23, and reading again at verse 40.! You can read from verse 39.

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us. But the other rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong. And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And he said to him, Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. Amen. Thomas Guthrie, a well-known minister in the early free church, tells about an incident he himself came across when he was going around various closes, as he calls them, in Edinburgh at the time, visiting all of these different homes in these closes.

And he said he came across this home, a pretty run-down home. And when he reached, the woman was on a bed and she was dying.

[1 : 22] There was somebody else in at the time. So he waited to the door until this other person had left. And then he went in. He spoke to her.

He spoke to her of the Lord. He saw a change coming over her as he presented the gospel to her. She accepted the Savior there and then.

And then very shortly afterward, she died. In that short space of time, he said, I saw a woman in three states in one day.

The state of sin, the state of salvation, and the state of glory. And that's what you find in the account we have of the thief on the cross.

He began that day as someone who was not saved. We know that because he himself joined his companion and others when they were railing against Jesus, finding fault with Christ.

[2 : 27] But then he was changed as he remained on the cross and I'm sure saw other things that were happening around him. But especially as he considered this Jesus who was crucified beside him.

And he came to cry out to Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. And he received this wonderful answer, which has been so precious to many people in the church ever since.

Where Jesus said, Truly I say to you, Today you will be with me in paradise. From hanging on a cross to paradise in a short space of time.

So let's look at these three states. As you find them in the example of this individual, this criminal, this man who came to know the Lord on the cross.

A lost state where you find him accusing Christ or throwing at least accusations at Jesus. We know from Matthew and the other Gospels, they all tell us that these two were crucified on each side of him.

[3 : 39] And that they both found fault with Jesus to begin with. And this one came to be changed and to appeal to Christ to remember him.

So it's clear that he was actually involved in railing against Jesus to begin with, along with his companion. And that's the bias of our lostness anyway, isn't it?

That's the bias of your heart and of my heart tonight. That instead of yielding to the authority of God, instead of yielding to the Bible's teaching that we are sinners and need salvation and need Christ, we're looking around for excuses.

We're looking around for others that are worse than ourselves. We're looking around for various ways in which we can justify our own position in remaining unsaved.

And that's what this man was doing to begin with. All the way through from the Garden of Eden onwards, human beings have been passing the fault onto somebody else.

[4 : 49] Instead of coming to acknowledge their deep need of Jesus themselves. And so the Lord is speaking to you and to me tonight, not to consider whoever else may be beside you, in front of you, behind you, or with you in life, in the path of life.

Tonight the Lord is saying, Consider me and consider your need in relation to me. And if you haven't yet received me, ask yourself, What are you doing without me?

What justification do you have for not being saved? What reasons are you giving for not actually coming to bow to this Savior, Jesus Christ?

And you know, every time we say no to Jesus, that's precisely what we're doing. It doesn't matter whether we do it quietly in our own minds, or whether we do it openly, as sadly you find so often in our society today, people who are all too bold and open in the rejection and ridicule of the gospel, and of Christ in the gospel.

So it doesn't matter whether it's an open, an open fault finding, an open rejection, or in the secrecy of our own heart. It really amounts to the same thing.

[6 : 21] We are saying no to the call of Christ. We are saying no to what the Bible actually says is the only sensible way of dealing without problem.

The problem of our sin, of our alienation from God, of the distance we brought between ourselves and God, the problem of being under God's wrath as we are born as sinners into this world, the problem of facing a lost eternity if we don't turn to Jesus.

Here was a man in a lost state. That's how Jesus found him. That's what was obvious before he started crying out to the Lord.

But then he became saved. We see him in a saved state because changes took place, or a great change took place at some point or other in this man as he hung on the cross beside the Lord.

We're not told exactly when it happened. We're not exactly told even how it happened. But it obviously happened because no longer is he throwing accusations at Jesus. No longer is he going along with his companion, finding fault with this Jesus.

[7 : 39] Indeed, he's saying to his companion, we're here justly. Why do you continue railing against him? We are receiving the due reward of our deeds.

Do you not fear God? Since you're under the same sentence of condemnation, and we indeed justly. In other words, he's saying, it's right for us that we are receiving the consequence of what we've done.

Three major aspects of repentance or of coming to be moved from death to life, coming to embrace Jesus, coming to actually place your trust in the Lord.

Here's someone, first of all, who knew himself. He knew himself. He came to know himself because you find there it's described, we indeed are suffering this justly.

It's right that this punishment has been laid upon us for what we've done. We're answering for our crimes. These were not minimal crimes. These were not people who had just done a little bit of hurt or harm here and there.

[8 : 50] These were serious criminals. These were people who really had committed serious crimes. And here he is saying, do you not fear God to his companion for we are indeed here justly.

As the Bible presents you with a lost eternity, as the Bible presents you with God's anger, God's wrath against sin, and against you, a sinner in your lostness, because that's what it does.

Never mind what the world says. Never mind what modern theology might say, that these are aspects of God we've moved away from. This is the Bible. This is God's Word. And as that comes home to you today, tonight, to your mind, as God is saying to you, you, as you are as a sinner, are under my wrath and destined for hell unless things change.

Do you then say in response, that's not fair? Do you say in response, but there are others, Lord, worse than I am.

I've never committed any great crime. I've never killed anyone. I've never seriously gone out to really commit something that's an obnoxious crime against someone else.

[10 : 15] I've never got myself involved with serious issues like that in life. Why should I accept the fact of the Bible telling me that I'm coming under the wrath of God?

Surely, when I've tried to do my best, surely when I've actually, each day I've lived, tried to live a decent life, even if I'm not religious, even if I haven't come to embrace the Lord, surely all that I've

done so far is enough to secure me against a lost eternity.

Well, the Bible tells us all have sinned and come short of the glory of God being justified freely through faith in Christ.

You know, we live in a world where so much human achievement is elevated, where it's held forth as really worthy to be praised.

And some human achievement is worthy to be praised, of course. God gives people gifts to achieve many things for themselves and on behalf of their fellow human beings. But when you find anyone saying, I have achieved all of this, I have this name in society, I'm looked up to by so many people, therefore it can't possibly be the case that God would actually condemn me to hell.

[11 : 48] Without Christ, without coming to have what this man came to have in the Savior beside Him, that's what will happen to you and to me as well.

And as it did, an incredibly solemn and sad thought even, never mind the actual event, that anyone who knows the gospel would not be saved.

That anyone who knows where salvation is set in the person of Jesus Christ and the means by which we come into the possession of it through faith and trust in Him, that anyone knowing these wonderful truths would end up with condemned criminals in hell.

friends, these are not popular things. They're not popular in terms of being preached or in received by people.

But you know what this Bible is. You know that this is the Word of God. You know that God has revealed these things to us clearly so that we should obtain eternal life through faith in Christ.

[12 : 58] Christ. And here is this man teaching us that He came to know Himself. He came to know that He was lost. He came to know that He was a sinner. He came to know that this condemnation that was His on the cross for His crimes was just.

It was right. It was something that He took to Himself and said, Lord, I know that this is right. I deserved it. You go back to Psalm 51. We sang part of that great psalm a few moments ago where David says pretty much the same thing.

Lord, I have done this. He had sinned by causing the death of Uriah the Hittite so that he could then take his wife to be his own wife.

He had committed more than one sin in what he had done in that action. But when he came to repent, he didn't say, Oh Lord, somebody made me do it. It was the pressure from this or that that made me do it.

It was because I saw other people in my surroundings that were compelling me or moving me to act in certain ways.

[14 : 07] It's because I followed the advice of somebody else that led me to actually arrange for the death of Uriah. No, he says, I did it.

I have no excuse. I have no reason. sin. Nobody else did it for me in my place. Nobody else made me do it. I am responsible.

And not only am I responsible, but I did it against you. What is sin? Is sin something you do against other people?

Well, that's maybe involved in it. If I do something similar to what David did and cause a serious matter like the death of somebody else, well, I can say, I've sinned against that man and I've sinned against that man's family.

I've sinned against his friends. I've sinned against so many people that were attached to him. But sin, ultimately, is not defined in a relationship with other people or what you do to somebody else.

[15 : 10] No, sin is a transgression of the law of God. As David said, against you, you only, I have sinned.

And here is this man coming to realize that same thing. I have sinned against God. I am worthy of this condemnation.

It is right that I am hanging here receiving the due reward for my sins. He knew himself. But he came to know Jesus as well.

But he said, this man has done nothing wrong. He had come to a knowledge of the innocence of Jesus, of how Jesus was not in himself worthy of being crucified there beside him.

He saw Jesus in a different category altogether to himself. How clearly he saw Jesus as the Savior of sinners.

[16:16] How clearly he understood sin against the Lord. How clearly he understood the concept of salvation. How clearly he understood anything to do with justification or any of these great doctrines of the New Testament.

Probably not much if anything at all. But he knew he needed salvation. And he knew what his salvation was. And he knew who the person beside him was.

And he knew that that's where he had to look in his relationship to eternity and to God. he came to know Jesus Christ.

And Jesus Christ as his Savior. And you remember in 1 Peter chapter 3 how Peter writes there with regard again to the death of Christ or the way in which Christ is substitute and mediator for his people.

1 Peter 3 and verse 18 where you find him saying Christ also suffered once for our sins the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God.

[17:28] How are we brought to God? How are we brought into a living fellowship with God so that his anger is turned away from us? So that he has that we have full acceptance in his presence?

What has led to this? How can we have gone from people who found fault with Jesus people who stood under condemnation how do we go from that to people who now accept that they need Christ and that Christ is the answer to their dilemma?

Well because they understand at least in a measure that this is God's provision for human beings. that this is what God has set up for us.

Salvation instead of condemnation. Salvation against our condemnation. Salvation eternal life instead of the death that we deserved.

each of the gospels tells us that these two criminals were situated on each side of the Lord.

[18:42] And we're only looking tonight at one of them. The one who came to be saved. The one who cried out to the Lord, Lord, remember me. The one to whom Jesus wonderfully said, today I'm saying truly to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

But never forget that the other thief was just as close to the Lord on the cross. That he heard the same things. That he saw with his own eyes things happening around him.

That he was challenged by his companion criminal on the cross on the other side of Jesus. It had no effect. He died as he lived.

A lost sinner. Always remember that one thief was lost while the other was saved.

And always remember that it's the cross of Christ that divides humanity one side or the other. Jesus is in the midst.

[19:48] On the one side of him, the thief that was saved, representing all who are saved through faith in Christ. On the other side, the thief who was not saved, who spurned the evidence that he had, and died as he lived, and went to a lost eternity.

As you look out over the world tonight, there are many divisions, many different kinds of things or ideologies that divide one set of people from another.

many things that divide human beings and keep them apart. But ultimately, there is only one thing that divides into these two categories of the saved or the lost.

That's the cross of Jesus. You either relate to him as your Savior, or you don't, and you join those who are not saved.

But it's the cross that divides humanity into these two distinct categories, the lost and the saved. No, the world will not accept that. The world will find that utterly too simplistic.

[21:01] And the world will say to you, and all of the ideologies in the world, and all of the great minds in the world, and our philosophers, or whatever, will say, that is an utterly ridiculous statement.

But it's not, is it? because Calvary is the center piece in which you find human beings divided by the cross of Jesus.

And the relationship to that cross, to that person on the cross, is what makes the division between them. Tonight, the world ultimately is divided into only two groups, the lost and the saved.

whatever our background, whatever race we belong to, this is how it is.

Which group are you in? Which side of the cross do you stand on? How do you relate to that cross of Christ? Does its shadow fall upon you, as it were, in a condemnatory fashion, because you have not yet accepted him?

[22 : 17] Or do you stand by that cross, and that cross is a great light into your soul, where you can say for sure, this is my Lord and my Savior, and I'm pleased to know him.

God knew himself, he knew Jesus, he also knew what to do, because he cried out to the Lord and said, Lord, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Remember me. me. It's not a long prayer, is it? But it's a dynamic prayer. It's a prayer that came from God working in his heart.

It's a prayer that came from a sense of his need, from a sense of his desperate need. It's a prayer that recognized there was something about this Jesus that he needed in order to be saved.

There was something about this prayer where he recognized that this man beside him had a kingdom, that he was a king, that the title written over him was not something that wasn't actually right to be written over him.

[23 : 29] This is Jesus, the king of the Jews. This is Jesus, the king. And he said, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Now, as we said, not sure just how clearly did this man see the nature of the kingdom of Jesus or the kingship of Jesus or the way by which you come into the kingdom, but he knew enough about himself, about his need, and about this Savior beside him to make this appeal to the Lord, Lord, remember me.

Whatever it means you're coming into your kingdom, whatever your kingdom is really like, I know that I need to be in it. So, please remember me when you come into it.

and you know that's really one of the great prayers of the Bible. It's only a few words long and it's in circumstances where you wouldn't expect such a person at such a time to make this appeal to such a Savior as was beside him.

But that's what the Lord tonight is requiring of you and of me. Because if he remembers you, all is well.

[24 : 56] He tells us in the Gospels, many people on that day of his return will say to him, Lord, Lord, open to us.

We did certain things in your name. We cast out demons in your name. And I will turn round, he said to them, and I say, I never knew you.

Depart from me. Imagine being told by Jesus, thinking that he was going to accept us anyway at the end of the course.

Imagine being told by the Lord himself, I never knew you. You were never one of mine. You didn't receive me.

You were on the wrong side of the cross. You didn't hear the terms of the Gospel obediently. And you know, if Jesus remembers us, that's all the security our soul requires.

[26 : 03] what more do you need than that the Lord Jesus Christ should remember you savingly? It doesn't matter who else remembers you.

It doesn't matter even if we're not remembered at all having been in this world. Supposing we pass from the scene of time and we're forgotten about. That doesn't matter ultimately as long as he remembers us.

As long as you're within the remembering of the Lord himself. As long as you come truly to know that you are within the security of Christ looking after you, remembering you, taking you into his secure care.

And that remembering of Jesus follows through into death and on to the other side into eternity. He never ever stops remembering his people.

Remembering here, of course, is caring for them. It's not just an action of memory or of mind. It's remembering in the sense of making provision for them all the time.

[27 : 18] Lord, remember me. You prayed that prayer. Very simple prayer. All the children here tonight can pray that prayer for themselves, realizing that if Jesus remembers them, then they're safe.

They don't need to fear death. They don't need to fear anything else, because within the remembering of Jesus is life and eternity of glory, God remembering his people savingly forevermore.

God He is essentially this thief placing himself in the custody and insecurity that Jesus himself is. Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

He came to know himself. He came to know his need. He came to know Christ to the measure that he required in order to cry out, remember me.

He knew what to do, as you do when you come to hear the gospel. I think one of the most wonderful things, as I go on in life, is to realize more and more, every single detail that God, that we require to know to be saved, God has already made clear to us.

[28 : 45] You can search the Bible in vain for some element of truth that you need to know in order to be saved, and that God has hidden from you, and it's not there.

Everything that you need to know to be saved, to be right with God, it's given out in the revelation of the Bible. There are things in the Bible very difficult for us to understand.

There are depths to the Bible that challenge our minds. There are things in the Bible of which we say, I'm not sure just what that means. And there's no disgrace in accepting that and confessing that, but there is nothing in the Bible hidden from you with regard to what you need to know to be saved.

This, said Paul, is a true statement and worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

And here's one of them. Lord, remember me. A saved state and very briefly, a heavenly state because Jesus said in response to that request, truly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise.

[30 : 00] Not tomorrow, not at some point in the future, not maybe it will take place, it will take place. No, Jesus said today. I want to assure you truly this is how it will be.

Today you will be with me in paradise. You will leave this world and you will leave it in such a way as your life flows into eternity, you will actually appear with me in paradise.

He had asked the Lord to remember him and the Lord is saying, this is how I will remember you.

You will come to live with me forever more and I'll never forget you.

You will be secured with me in heaven, in paradise, where life forever more exists. The Lord was going to go to eternity from the cross through the resurrection onto heaven.

And even before the resurrection, spiritually, he would be leaving this world, as he said, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. And there he would find a thief, no longer a thief, but a saved, saved human being.

[31 : 27] He died before Jesus. We know that because the soldiers came to break the legs of those. Sorry, he died after Jesus when the centurion came to break the legs of those who were on the cross, which would hasten their death.

He found Jesus was already dead. Jesus had gone to heaven to the Father. And shortly after, the thief would die. Very quickly after, his legs would be broken.

And as he died, he found himself instantly with Jesus in paradise. Isn't that a thought?

That the distance from this world to the next is so short and so thin and for the Christian, so glorious. Paradise.

It's a word that really was used by Persian kings, first of all, way back in Old Testament times. And it actually means literally an enclosed garden.

[32 : 38] Kings in those times would have attached to their property a garden that was closed round with large hedges or large walls so that they could entertain their guests privately, free from others looking in upon them.

Paradise. And it came to mean the garden of heaven itself. And it's a wonderful concept that paradise spiritually in heaven is where Jesus entertains his guests forever more at the marriage banquet of the Lamb after he returns.

And where forever more they will be held as special guests of his in that garden that none can disturb, that none can enter into, whose walls will never be broken, and they will enjoy being with Christ forevermore.

Today you will be with me in paradise. There are many gardens mentioned in the Bible, three in particular. I close with this. garden of Eden.

There is the garden of Gethsemane, and there is the garden of heaven that is described as a garden more than once. The garden of Eden is where we fell, where we sinned against God, from which we were driven out, showing God's displeasure and anger at what we have done.

[34 : 18] We were taken out, driven out of Eden, and came under God's condemnation. And then in Gethsemane, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus began to be sore amazed, Mark tells us, and

made that wonderful prayer to the Father, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

What was the cup? The cup was the suffering, the damnation that he had to endure to save his people from their sins, the penalty of sin. Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not my will, but thine be done.

Thanks be to God, that he took that cup, that he drained that cup to the last drop, so that we might be saved.

What happened in Eden led to what happened in Gethsemane, and then on to Calvary, of course. And then what happened there, what Jesus obtained through the cross, is what leads to the garden of heaven.

So where are we tonight then? When we know that this is the word of God, that we are in a lost state by nature, that we need to come into the state of salvation through accepting Christ, and that we await then when we do so, that heavenly state accompanying Christ.

[35 : 59] Christ. This man went from accusing Christ to accepting Christ and on to accompanying Christ. You will be with me in paradise.

May it be so for me, may it be so for you. What a wonderful ending to this communion it will be for you tonight if you came here in your unsaved state, and you came to know Jesus and therefore entered a saved state.

And if you're here tonight anticipating that heavenly state of heaven, Jesus concluded his wonderful prayer in John 17, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold, that they may gaze upon my glory.

For you loved me before the foundation of the world. Let's pray. Eternal God, we give thanks for the way in which your word draws us to the cross.

cross. And we pray that that may be our own concern all the days that we live, so that even those who will despise the cross to this day will nevertheless give consideration to the witness and testimony of your people.

[37 : 30] Blessed to us, we pray, this passage of your word. Help us to receive it willingly and by your Holy Spirit planted in our hearts. Lord, grant to us that we may tonight reach forth and claim you as our Savior.

And we have done that already, O Lord. We thank you for this renewed opportunity to reach out again and to reconfirm our receiving of you and of your saving of us.

Go before us, we pray, and grant us, we receive good things in the fellowship afterwards for our bodily needs. We give thanks for them, and we pray that you would bless them to us.

Hear us now, we pray for Jesus' sake. Amen. The final psalm now is Psalm 73. Psalm 73, again it's in the Scottish Psalter, page 316, verses 23 to 26.

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Thou dost me hold by my right hand, and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live, wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterwards receive me to abide.

[38 : 47] So, Psalm 73, verses 23 to 26, to God's praise. verse 23, O Lord, I am with thee.

Thou dost me all, I am O Lord, I am with thee. I am with thee. I am with thee.

And still a hope let me be. And with thy guns still hide, hide, there will give love love and guide.

And still I hope in other words may save me to abide.

holy Beside thee there is none.

[40 : 46] My pleasure, Lord, doth fear, doth fear, but God of faith in ever.

For of my heart God is the strength and portion forever.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen. Amen.