

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: LUKE 23:32-43



The STORY

Read about the thief on the cross with Jesus in Luke 23:32-43.

Please note: *The discussion questions in the following sections are written to serve as a guide in teaching our youngest children. Three to six year olds are not going to be able to answer these questions like their older brothers and sisters. Please refer to the God's Story Preschool Curriculum Outline for additional ideas.*

After reading the story, use the following questions to involve the children in a discussion.

- Why were there two men crucified with Jesus? (Luke tells us that they were criminals. Matthew 27:38 tells us they were robbers.)
- What were the people saying to Jesus on the cross? (The rulers and soldiers scoffed and mocked Him. Explain to the children that mocking means to make fun or tease. Explain that it would be very cruel to mock someone who was in terrible pain.)
- What did Jesus say about the people who crucified Him? (Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.")
- What was it that the people didn't know? (They didn't know that He was God the Son, dying for their sin on the cross. Even in Jesus' death, He was thinking of others.)

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CRAFT QUESTIONS

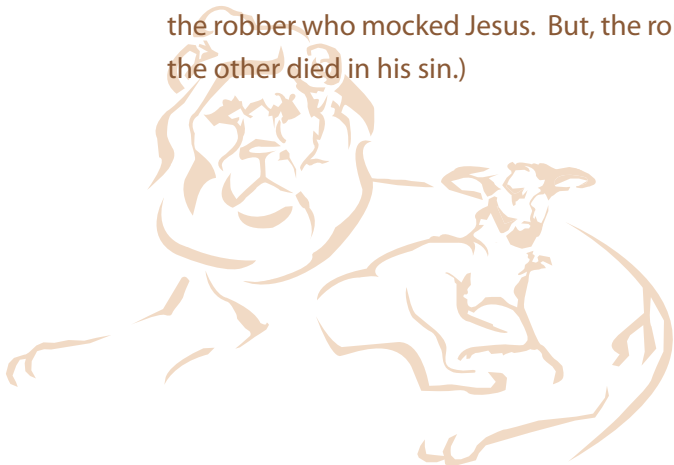
Coloring sheets have been provided that exemplify today's lesson: the robber calling out to Jesus. Engage the children by asking:

- What did the robber ask Jesus for? (He asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus was in heaven.)
- What did Jesus say in response to his request? (Jesus told the robber, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Jesus forgave the robber his sin and promised him heaven. The robber trusted and put his faith in Jesus. The robber did not understand all that was taking place, Jesus dying for his sins. But, the robber did understand that he was a sinner deserving of punishment and that sinless Jesus was the Messiah.)
- How can we follow the repentant robber's example? (We can believe that Jesus is the Savior and call out to Him to change our hearts just like He changed the heart of the robber.)

SNACK QUESTIONS

While the children are eating the snack, engage the children by asking:

- What was different about the two robbers? (One of the robbers joined in the mocking and one did not.)
- What did the robber with the changed heart do about the mocking? (The robber with the changed heart defended Jesus telling the mocking robber that Jesus did not do anything wrong and that they should fear God because they were sinners.)
- How are we like the robbers? (We are all sinners, just like the robbers. If we trust in Jesus and turn from our sin, we are like the robber who repented. If we continue in our sin and do not trust Jesus, we are like the robber who mocked Jesus. But, the robbers were both sinners guilty of death. One went to heaven, the other died in his sin.)



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WHERE IS the Gospel?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

This story is a wonderful picture of the saving work of the cross. Even a man on the verge of death, having lived a life of crime, can trust in Jesus. So effective is the work of Christ that it can take the worst of sinners from the executioner's hand into paradise. The robber didn't know the full measure of truth behind the death of an innocent savior, but he knew this: he was a sinner deserving of punishment and in need of the Messiah. Jesus gave this man the gift of faith to believe.

One day we, and all who trust in Christ, will get the opportunity to talk with the man who hung upon a cross next to Christ. The question is who are we like: the repentant robber or the mocker?

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

