
GROWTH GROUP LENT 2017 – AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS
WEEK 3 – MARCH 19, 2017 - LUKE 23:32-38

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) What are some of the attributes of leaders that you have known or admired?

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Jesus was lead away from Jerusalem to the place called the Skull. Crucifixion was a common form of capital punishment from the sixth century B.C. until it was banned by Constantine in 337. Jesus is crucified between two other criminals.

Jesus models forgiveness and asks God to forgive the people who are responsible for his crucifixion. It is amazing that in the midst of people mocking Jesus, he still asks for their forgiveness. Jesus had taught about the importance of loving your enemies and forgiveness and non-violence and now he was modeling it for all to see. We are given an example and reminded that we are to be a people who forgive those who have wronged us.

People in the crowd mocked him, the soldiers mocked him, and as we will see in a couple of weeks, even one of the criminals crucified next to him hurled insults at him. They all wondered why he could not save himself. They continued to miss that this was a part of God's plan and that Jesus must suffer and give himself over to death in order to fully bring his kingdom and redemption.

"Wine vinegar" was the ordinary wine drunk by soldiers. It is not clear whether the wine offered to him was done as an act of kindness or a means of mockery. Either way, Jesus refused. The soldiers again question what sort of king Jesus really was. Surely a "real" king would be able to save himself from being on the cross.

All of this questioning and mocking is really about questioning the validity of Jesus' kingship. This was not the way a king was expected to behave. Kings were people of power and might and yet Jesus was hanging on the cross offering his life and not fighting back

In the span of five verses, Jesus is referred to as "the Christ of God, the Chosen One," "the King of the Jews" (twice), and "the Christ." Christ is used to express the Jewish understanding of Messiah. The concept of Messiah in the Old Testament was a ruler who would come and rescue Israel. The Messiah



would be an anointed leader who would overcome the enemies of Israel and bring freedom. Yet Jesus was a different sort of king who came to save and heal, to show love and mercy to others. He would not be a conquering, militaristic hero who lived a life as a warrior. Rather, he would bring a message of grace and forgiveness.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read Luke 23:32-38

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” [a] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” ³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” ³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: This is the King of the Jews.

- 2) In the gospels we often find Jesus in the middle of difficult or uncertain circumstances. He is placed on a cross in the middle of two criminals. In John 20:19, the disciples locked themselves in a room for fear of what the Jewish leaders might do to them. Yet, Jesus appears in the middle of the disciples, stands amongst them and speaks words of encouragement to them. Share about a time when you felt like Jesus was “with you” in the midst of a difficult situation.
- 3) When Jesus asks God to...“forgive them for they do not know what they are doing,” who do you think he is referring to? Who is he asking God to forgive and why would he do this?
- 4) How do you respond when people treat you unfairly or you feel like you have been wronged by others? Are you quick to forgive, or do you have a difficult time forgiving those who have hurt you?
- 5) Jesus makes it clear throughout the gospels that we are to be a people who forgive others. Have you found effective ways of practicing forgiveness?
- 6) In the Old Testament there were three anointed offices. There were prophets, priests and kings. Jesus fulfills all of those offices and in our text today we read that the sign placed above his head read, “King of the Jews.” In what sort of ways was Jesus a different type of king than what was expected?
- 7) Is it a helpful idea to think about Jesus as king, as it relates to being his follower? What kind of language do you use to describe your relationship with Jesus?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) In Mark 1:15 Jesus says that the kingdom of God is near and then calls people to repent and believe the good news. When you think about the kingdom of God, how do you describe it? If the kingdom of God is here today, and not just something that is going to happen in the future, what does that have to say about the way in which we live our lives? Can you think of a tangible way that you can “live out or share” the kingdom of God this week?