

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 4
WEEK OF MARCH 26TH

AT THE FOOT
OF THE CROSS
Lenten Sermon Series 2017

GROWTH GROUP LENT 2017 – AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

WEEK 4 – MARCH 26, 2017 - LUKE 2:33-35 AND JOHN 19:23-27

GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) Share about a time you experienced some kind of loss.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Apart from this scene in Luke, Simeon is unknown. Luke does not seem overly concerned about describing who Simeon was, but instead focuses on the role he plays in the story of Jesus. Simeon had been waiting for the Lord to bring redemption and for God's kingdom to arrive. Once Simeon realizes that salvation has come, he can now depart in peace. But before he dies, he has a word of blessing for Joseph and Mary, and a specific word for Mary.

Mary and Joseph marvel at what Simeon has to say because they are witnessing again a divine revelation. What they had heard from the angels is now being confirmed by the words of Simeon. But Simeon also has a very disturbing message for Mary. Though Jesus will accomplish great things and though the poor and the humble will be exalted, Mary will experience anguish. Some have suggested that Mary's anguish had to do with the mission of her son and her concern over what he was doing. (See Luke 8:19-21). Most have suggested her anguish had to do with John 19:23-27 which talks about Mary's presence at the crucifixion and the words Jesus speaks to her.

At the cross the soldiers seem more concerned about dividing up Jesus' clothes than about His death. They were focused on the seamless garment and instead of tearing it in four, they decided to play a game to see who would "win" it. Psalm 22:18 has a reference to this happening as David describes his situation.

John contrasts the soldiers' intentions with the friends of Jesus who are present at the crucifixion. In addition to the women who are mentioned, there is at least one disciple present – the disciple whom Jesus loved. Most scholars believe that this beloved disciple is the author of the gospel of John. As Jesus speaks to his mom and the beloved disciple from the cross he is creating a sort of non-legal adoption formula. The traditional role of the oldest son in that society was to provide for the care of the mother when the father or husband was no longer around. So in this statement Jesus is actually fulfilling his role as the oldest son, since it appears Joseph is no longer around.



Once again we see the remarkable care that Jesus had for others, as well as for his own mother. As the soldiers play games for his possessions, Jesus looks out on some of his followers and specifically makes sure that his mother will be taken care of.

One can only imagine the anguish and pain that Mary must have felt as she watched her own child being executed. All along she had known this was a possibility, but now the fulfillment of all that she had been told, was coming to fruition. It is encouraging to know that she was not alone as she grieved and mourned the loss of her son. Her friends stood beside her, and Jesus made sure that she had a home to return to when he was no longer around.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

Read Luke 2:33-35

³³ *The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.* ³⁴ *Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

Read John 19:23-27

²³ *When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.* ²⁴ *"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." So this is what the soldiers did.* ²⁵ *Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.* ²⁶ *When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.*

- 2) Contrast the four soldiers with the four women: how were their focus and reactions different?
- 3) Given what Mary remembered from Simeon's prophecy, what do you think she was thinking/feeling at this moment?
- 4) Why did Jesus have to suffer and die? How can the cross of Christ be redemptive?
- 5) As Christians, how do we care for those who are suffering? When you went through your own suffering, how did others help you?
- 6) How can we see past a tragedy? How does Romans 5:3-5 point us beyond suffering?

Read Romans 5:3-5: ³ *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;* ⁴ *perseverance, character; and character, hope.* ⁵ *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

- 7) Where do you find hope and life in the midst of suffering?

BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Pray together that God would reveal opportunities for you to come alongside someone in the midst of their suffering.