

THE PARADOX OF SALVATION

Isaiah 53:1-9

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- What surprises you about the process of salvation?
- In what ways do you remember and reflect on the events of Holy Week in your personal worship and in corporate worship?

Using worldly logic, salvation in Jesus Christ does not make sense. It defies natural consequences. It challenges our expectations. As we approach Easter, it is important once again to dwell with the paradoxes found in Jesus' journey to the cross. Taking time to reflect on these paradoxes no matter how uncomfortable or difficult they may seem, can help us truly appreciate the depth of God's love for us - that he would go to such lengths to ensure our redemption once and for all.

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- Imagine yourself in a courtroom. You are watching a judge knowingly sentence an innocent man, who willingly took your place to endure a punishment you deserve. Describe the emotions and reactions you might experience in that moment and in the days/years that follow. Why do you think it's so easy for us to distance ourselves from our culpability in Jesus' death?
- Is it worth our effort to try to make sense of the paradoxes of salvation like punishing peace, wounded healing, living death? Why or why not? What makes mystery difficult for us?
- In your experience, how common is it for people to question whether (or perhaps suggest that) bad times, sickness, or other experiences of suffering are God's punishment for sin? Why can we confidently say this is wholly untrue, that our experience of suffering is not a punishment from God in response to sin?
- Think of places in your life where is God calling you to enter into someone else's pain as Christ came alongside us and entered into our pain.
- How does the story of salvation, with all its paradoxes, bring glory to God?

Related Passages

- **Psalm 115:3**
- **Matthew 26-27**
- **2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

Conclusion

Reflect on this excerpt from Richard Neuhaus' reflection "Father, Forgive Them."

Every human life, conceived from eternity and destined to eternity, here finds its story truly told. In this killing that some call senseless we are brought to our senses. Here we find out who we most truly are because here is the One who is what we are called to be. The derelict cries, "Come, follow me." Follow him there? We recoil. We close our ears. We hurry on to Easter. But we will not know what to do with Easter's light if we shun the friendship of the darkness that is wisdom's way to light.

Spend time intentionally reading at least one of the gospel accounts of Jesus' journey into Jerusalem and to the cross, found in Matthew chapters 21-27, Mark chapters 11-15, Luke chapters 19-23, or John chapters 12-19. Allow the "friendship of the darkness" found in these stories to bring you to your senses and discover who you "most truly are" as you discover anew the person and acts of Jesus Christ.

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