

The thief demonstrated logical and familiar steps toward faith; the first step was seeing himself for who he is. He knew he deserved punishment and he admitted to his wrongdoing. However, he was also able to see himself as worthy of redemption through God's love and grace. How do you see yourself in need? What would be your confession of that need? What "distance" must you travel in order to see yourself worthy of God's love and forgiveness? Pray for God's grace as you write your thoughts here.

Thursday, March 18

Read Luke 23:32-43. The second logical step toward faith is seeing Jesus for what he is as our earthly redeemer. Jesus demonstrated the great love of God to the very end of his life; a life marked by sacrifice, forgiveness, care and compassion. How do you see Jesus as relevant to your life? What titles and names for Jesus are important to you? The words that talk about Jesus as King and paradise as the place where we can be in God's presence is not just a future hope but a present day reality. In short, who is Jesus to you? Write your ideas here.

Friday, March 19

Read Luke 23:32-43. The third step toward faith is acceptance; not Jesus' or God's acceptance of us – that has always been offered from the time of creation – but rather our acceptance of what God offers through our relationship with God through Christ. God is not coercive or forceful when it comes to our faith; rather God invites to be in fellowship with him and others who accept that ever present invitation. The remaining question for all who seek God's presence and peace is will you accept it? Write your thoughts here praying for growth in your relationship with God through Jesus the Christ.

Message Notes – March 14, 2021

*Words to the Cross – A Word of Faith**

- I. Let's begin the message this morning with a question: Where does _____ come from?
 - A. The _____ had long been a symbol of our Christian faith, but if we think about it, it is a very unlikely place for faith to be found.
 - B. To be clear, the cross was the hangman's _____, electric _____, gas chamber or lethal injection of its time.
 - C. When we consider who first looked to the cross as inspiration for faith, it just may have been the _____ who hung on a cross of his own.
- II. One thing is certain, this repentant thief made a _____ journey towards faith; from mocking Jesus to asking to be remembered when Jesus comes into his kingdom.
 - A. When I made the decision to follow Jesus as my savior, it was not a long journey from all the involvement in church to making that _____ decision.
 - B. There are different _____ toward faith; sometimes the journey is short in time or short in terms of how far one has to move toward possessing faith.
 - C. Some might say that thief's confession is tantamount to a death bed _____, to which I would say, "So what?"
- III. The fact is the experience of that thief 2000 years ago demonstrates some _____ that represent all of our experiences in coming to faith.
 - A. First the thief came to see _____.
 1. The first step toward faith is the admission of our _____.

*Luke 23:32-43

2. It is not about what _____ done. It's about God's tremendous and never ending love and _____.
- B. The second logical step is seeing _____ for who he is.
1. The thief saw himself _____ of the love and forgiveness Jesus demonstrated
 2. Now that, my friends is faith. Now if but _____; remember me _____ you come into your kingdom.
- C. The final step toward faith is _____;
1. Not God's acceptance of us, but _____ final acceptance of the grace, love, mercy and peace that God offers us.
 2. God deemed us worthy of love when were _____ in God's image
- IV. I often get asked, "What do you think _____ will be like?"
- A. I'm not glib when I say I really don't _____.
 - B. What I do know and what I do believe Jesus is saying is we will be in his _____ – in the very _____ of God.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, March 15

The message began with a question: Where does faith come from? Having heard the message, you might respond to some of the ideas shared. That aside, how would you answer that question in your own words? Consider how the question might be asked differently. What is the source of faith in your experience? What is the mechanism through which a person comes to faith or trust in

something or someone? You are invited to ponder these questions and record your answers here.

Tuesday, March 16

The cross has been a symbol of the Christian faith since the second century but it was not widely displayed until the fourth century after the emperor, Constantine, converted to Christianity. While the cross has become common as jewelry and tattoos and all art medium, it was originally a deplorable symbol of suffering and death. I was literally the hangman's noose, electric chair, gas chamber or lethal injection of its time – only more gruesome.

Of course there has been a dramatic change of feelings about the cross; from a sign of ultimate shame to one of the best know symbols of faith. It is very appropriate to ask during the Season of Lent, how do you feel about the cross? Do you display it through jewelry or in your home? Does it give you a sense of peace or well-being? Do you think of the sacrifice that Jesus made when you see a cross? Consider these questions and write your thoughts here.

Wednesday, March 17

Read Luke 23:32-43. The thought was shared during the message that the repentant thief was the first to look to the cross as a source of faith. That thief travelled a long distance in terms of his behavior and beliefs; from mocking Jesus to asking Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into his kingdom. That journey also included the thief defending Jesus to the other thief saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong."