

Scripture Reading: Luke 23:32-46

"Today you will be with me in Paradise."

Luke's account of Jesus' death has limited details about how Jesus was crucified. He simply says that Jesus was crucified at the place called The Skull with two criminals. There is no mention of nails, a crown of thorns, or a pierced side. What Luke does tell us is what Jesus' death means. He tells us what it means for us.

In the mocking and derisive insults, we discover that Jesus is the King, the Messiah, and the One who saves. We discover that Jesus is the kind of King and the kind of Messiah who dies for the salvation of the world. (Notice that the word "save" is used four times in this passage.)

We also discover that Jesus saves by offering forgiveness and the promise to be with him in God's Paradise, and this is the truly amazing Good News of Good Friday: On the cross, Jesus (God's Son, the Messiah-King) offers salvation by the forgiveness of sins and possibility of being with Jesus -- wherever Jesus is. Even more amazing is the fact that Jesus forgives people who don't know what they are doing.

Like us.

In Romans we read, "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." God's offer of forgiveness comes to us before we know that we need to be forgiven. Jesus Christ died for our salvation because God loves us more than we can imagine and God knew then -- and knows now -- that forgiving us was -- and is -- our only hope.

In prayer, acknowledge your need for forgiveness. Be honest with yourself and God. Give thanks to God for this immeasurable gift.

Hear the Good News: *By the grace of God through Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.*

Now ... live as though you believe it is true!