

Ridin' High Cowboy Church

8771 FM 35

Union Valley/Royse City, TX

Pastor: Steve Bishop

March 27, 2016 – He is Risen!

There are times in your life when the light bulb of your mind comes on and you figure something out that's been bothering you. Pastor Steve told us the story of when as a sophomore in high school, he was on the varsity baseball team. The opposing team's pitcher was throwing curve balls where the ball would drop just as it crossed the plate. Well, he kept swinging at where he thought the ball was when an intoxicated man in the stands told him to swing at where the ball is going to be. Steve did, and bounced the ball off the left field wall to win the game!

So many of us take a swing at life and miss.

Luke 23:32-43

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

Both these men were likely insurrectionists. Everyone had disappointed them. They were mad at religious leaders for bowing to Rome; mad at God for not doing something about it (400 years since the last prophet) and they were not trustworthy enough to serve as rowers in a Roman ship or even be a slave.

Even at their death, they were cheated out of the spotlight, and their last chance to be heard, because Jesus stole the spotlight.

33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left.

It seems strange that with only minutes/hours to live, God introduces us to two characters who are so deeply hurt by people and God that they are made at God. There must be a purpose in including these guys in the story.

Maybe it's because some of us have been or are now mad at God and feel like we can't trust him.

34 Jesus said, "Father, (when men are dying, they usually call for their Momma, not their Father) forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Never had anyone prayed for and forgiven the people who just crucified him.

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 other; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, 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.”

In the movies, they are shown very high in the air, when actually, their feet were mere inches off the ground.

38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

Matthew records that both criminals began to insult Jesus.

Translated: “you can’t save yourself and you can’t save us, God is not real, you’re a coward and a fake.”

Very strange scene, maybe never happened before in history, a conversation between 3 dying men...What would make a man about to die blaspheme (in a religious way)...words that Luke couldn’t print (the Bible’s version of a bleep)

This guy had confused God with life and life with God. Every dream that didn’t come true, every bad thing that had happened to him must be a result of God being mad at him so he was mad at God.

What if he’d said “God where are you?” The answer...twelve feet away enduring the same thing you are. All that has happened to you in life is to bring you to this point of seeing God.

**Do you know where God’s been during all your suffering?
Right beside you.**

Then Luke records that one of the criminals had a change of heart after thinking about what Jesus had said.

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” This is my biggest fear for people that they will never give up their pride and fear God. He said, “since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” He was saying that this is not God’s fault, he is suffering with you for doing nothing wrong.

Then he does something amazing, he asks Jesus for a favor. (I usually ask God for favors and I try and bargain with God).

He had nothing to offer Jesus at this point, nothing to bargain with, he is about to die. When you're hanging on a cross, you have nothing to quit doing or start doing.

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

God's love for you is not reflective of what's happening to you.

Why did Jesus do this for him ... BECAUSE HE ASKED...he opened his clinched hand and pride, forgot his reputation and got from God what life had never given him.

Why would God add these characters at the last minute of the most important event in history, maybe because of all the angry people, disappointed people who say there must be something wrong with me or something wrong with God.

God can survive your anger. YOU CAN'T, God can handle years of you being angry at him, but you CAN'T, our lives get more and more complicated the longer we stay angry at God.

God is willing to give you everything life didn't. If we will just ask ... that's grace, that's mercy, that's why we call Him the SAVIOR.

But in all this, the one thing that Jesus chose to mention to the repentant thief on the cross (if you can only say one thing, what do you say?): "You will be WITH ME today."

From Noon until about three in the afternoon darkness covered the land, the veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom and Jesus said, ***"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" and he died.***

But three days later, there was an empty tomb. And Jesus appeared to hundreds of people.

And the light bulbs started coming on everywhere ...