

FOOD TIME: (30-45 minutes) – Remember to give some direction for this time.

MEETING TIME: (45 minutes)

We break from the book of Acts to celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This message for Easter focuses on darkness being on the run, and we see part of that here in Luke chapter 23. We enter the passage this week with Jesus already on the cross and the two criminals are on their own crosses to bear. We see here that there is no time like the present to accept who Jesus is and we see the contrast between the two criminals. One does not recognize who Christ is, and the other does. As we get into discussion this week, pay attention to the two different criminals and how Jesus loves even at the point of death on the cross.

READ Luke 23:39-49

39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." **40** But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? **41** And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." **42** Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." **43** And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise." **44** Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. **45** Then the sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was torn in two. **46** And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last. **47** So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!" **48** And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. **49** But all His acquaintances and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

FACILITATE Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever come across someone who acts like the first criminal? How should we respond?
2. What is the difference in reaction from the first criminal to the second criminal?
3. How can we help people understand what Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was for?
4. Why is the reaction of the centurion so important in this part of the passage?
5. The sacrifice of Jesus took so long. How can we use that as a way to help spread the gospel?

PRAY- Take the last 10 minutes to pray about the needs of the group.

APPLICATION- While this is such a hard piece of scripture because it shows the suffering of Jesus Christ, we can take so much from it. It extenuates the love that Jesus has for us. The fact that He would suffer so much and for so long for us, knowing that it was to save all of us. It also shows us that at any time we can accept Him. The second criminal recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah and at the point of his death, he is given confidence of the promise of Jesus. As you spend time celebrating the resurrection this week, look for those opportunities to bring glory to His name. How can what you do on a daily basis be a testimony for someone who might be able to come to Christ as well? Using a chapter like this can help someone flee the darkness that is constantly trying to engulf us on a daily basis.