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LENT 3 Midweek Homily

March 10, 2021

Luke 23:39-43

We're You There ... as a Confessor?

Were you there as a Confessor? Think about these words from the Gospel of Luke... here we have the crucifixion. There are two criminals; one on each side of Jesus.

The scene we are considering today is one of the best known from the passion story. All four Gospels describe Jesus death as taking place with two criminals. Yet Luke is the only gospel that gives them **voice**.

Scripture tells us that one of the criminals who were hanging there kept deriding Jesus in saying,

“Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

And meanwhile there's a criminal on the other side of Jesus who says,

“Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

Put yourself in the shoes of these two criminals. Now imagine yourself there as a **confessor**.... It seems to me we have a choice here.

One choice is to remain in a self-centered world where all that matters is what you can get out of any situation you find yourself. I guess we should think for just a moment. The thief who first challenges Jesus is desperate. All he seems to be able to think about is finding a way of escaping is cruel punishment and the eminent death that is before him.

Scripture says that he **derides** Jesus. Other translations choose other words instead of deride. – **railed** and **hurling abuse** are two other words or phrases used.

So this first criminal doesn't really beg Jesus for release. Instead, Scripture says he derides Jesus. After all, he is desperate.

Let's look at the second criminal for a moment. Instead of rebuking Jesus, he rebukes the other criminal, reminding him that they are both there because they deserve to be whereas Jesus is there unjustly. Then he speaks directly to Jesus and we see the ***faith*** of this person. He doesn't even ask to be saved. He simply says that he only wants to be remembered.

In the second criminal we hear a testimony of his confidence that Jesus is the Messiah and King. From Jesus we hear affirmation and promise when he replies, ***“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”***

Were you there... As a confessor? Again, it seems to me we hear and see two choices before us.

1. Disbelief and mockery
- OR**
2. Faith and confidence

Each of us has a choice. Were you there as a confessor? It is up to you to choose.

Amen