

Luke 23: 35-43

And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying:

“He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!”

The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying,

‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’

There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews’

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying,

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

But the other rebuked him, 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.’

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

He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.

Meditation:

**Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen is a physician, who works with the terminally ill,
as they deal with the emotional and spiritual turbulence of dying.
In one of her books, “My Grandfather’s Blessings” she tells this story:
A woman in her thirties approached Dr. Remen at a crowded party.
The woman told her that she resented all this talk about death as something meaningful.
Then the woman went to recount the horrible death of her husband
a number of years earlier. He had been diagnosed with cancer;
and as therapy after therapy had failed,
he became bitter, lashing out at everyone,
rebuffing anyone who tried to comfort him.
When he looked back at his life, he regretted the choices he had made.
and he died angry and withdrawn.
The woman ended her telling of this ordeal by saying: “I do not want to die this way.”
Dr. Remen asked her:
“So how do you need to live to be sure that you do not die this way?”**

**In our Gospel reading today, Jesus dies as he lived...
the soldiers, the rulers the people mocked him as he hung on the cross...
they demanded that he prove his that was indeed a Son of the Most High,
the King of the Jews
by coming down from the cross...
One of the thieves who was being also crucified wanted Jesus to save him too...
while he was at it...**

**But Jesus didn’t do it.
He did not come down from the cross to save his life...
He refused to buy into the temptation that he had to prove his relationship with his Abba...**

**and this wasn't the first time that he refused to
publicly put God to the test just to satisfy the disbelief of others...**

**he had done a few years earlier when he spent 40 days in the desert just after his baptism
by his cousin, John**

Do you remember that story?

As Luke tells it, Jesus is tempted three times:

You're hungry...if you really are the Messiah: to turn these stones into bread...

**If you really are the Messiah...imagine how much power I could give you if you are just
willing to worship me...**

Prove to me, Jesus, that you are the anointed one of the most high:

throw yourself over this cliff and let's see God send the angels to catch and protect you...

Jesus resisted all three temptations...

He was so secure in his own identity as God's son...

that he did not need to prove anything...

and he was so confident in who he knew his God to be:

that he didn't need to put God to the test.....

Jesus simply lived his life teaching what he had experienced:

the unconditional love and the boundless mercy of God.

Jesus met his physical death the way that lived his life:

loving and forgiving...

Which then, brings up the question for us:

How do we want to die?

**We, obviously, have no control over WHAT we will die from or when...
but we do have some influence of who will we be as we near the end of our time on earth.
Will we be angry? frightened? complaining?
will we isolate ourselves?**

**Will we run from those who love us the most?
or will we find comfort in the presence of the ones we love...
will we accept the difficulties of the situation
even as we find the gifts of what is offered?
Will we have hope in whatever happens next?
Will we be able to trust in the goodness and love of God?**

**If we wish the second scenario to be ours, we have to start experiencing all of that now...
They say we are all dying right now anyways...
Each of us are closer to our death at this moment than when we woke up this morning!**

**How have we lived this day so far?
Have we spent our time complaining of what is not or
have we given thanks for what we have?**

Have we said hurtful, angry words or have we shared kindness and compassion?

**Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr, likes to say
“How we do anything is how we do everything!”**

**I once knew a woman who believed that once she got to be an old woman,
she would be nicer to people...**

No, surprise, that didn't happen.

If I want to be a ____ (you fill in the blanks), as an older woman, an older man

I need to be a BLANK.....now...as well, let's just say a middle aged woman...

**If you want to approach your death without fear and regret...
you need to live your life, right now...this day...without fear and regret.**

**If you have any regrets, any coulda, woulda, shoulda's....
take care of them NOW.**

**If you find yourself questioning the existence of the Holy...
if you find yourself frightened of the next life...
start dealing with these questions now:
get serious about your spiritual life NOW
seek out others you might respect, read, listen...pay attention...**

**If you find yourself still being unable to resolve your questions about who God is
and what kind of God there might be...don't worry about it too much...**

**Just live your life kindly...
offer forgiveness as often as you can and then a little bit more...
be more generous than you think you need to be...
laugh a lot, of course not AT anyone but with them...
build people up, don't put them down...
don't spread rumors or gossip...
Help any chance that you can....**

and always say thank you as much as possible...

**When/if you genuinely live your life in these ways...
as you approach your death these habits and attitudes will bear you up...
and you will realize the truth to the statement that:**

“God is love, and those who abide in love, abide and God and God in them”
Because all along your way of laughing and loving and forgiving and sharing
you will have been living in the Presence of the Most High...
and physical death won’t change that...
and for that we can certainly say “Thank you!” amen.