

# Paradise

*FCC Life Group Discussion Notes*

*Based on the "Hope From the Cross" Series of Matthew Rogers*

*04-13-2025*

## Summary of the Text

The sermon centers on Jesus' words from the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43), spoken to the repentant criminal. Despite mockery from Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers, and one criminal, Jesus stayed on the cross out of love, not necessity. The repentant criminal's plea, "Jesus, remember me," prompted Jesus' promise of salvation, revealing three hope-filled truths: anyone can be saved, believers are instantly with Jesus after death, and it's never too late to trust Him. The message encourages inviting others to Easter to share this hope.

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## Ice Breaker for Discussion

**Question:** *"If you could have any car in the world, what would it be and why?"*

This connects to Bobby's Mustang story and sparks fun, engaging conversation.

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## Point 1: Anyone Can Be Saved

**Scripture Reading:** Direct someone to read **Romans 10:9-11 (CSB):**

*"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes on him will not be put to shame."*

### **Summary of Point 1:**

Jesus' promise to the criminal, who couldn't earn salvation due to his nailed hands and feet, shows salvation is a gift, not a reward. Scriptures like 1 Timothy 2:4 and Titus 2:11 affirm God's desire for all to be saved, no matter their past, offering hope that no one is beyond grace.

### **Discussion Questions for Point 1:**

1. Why is it meaningful that Jesus saved a criminal who couldn't "deserve" it? How does this challenge ideas about who qualifies for God's grace?
  2. The sermon encourages inviting others to Easter. Who in your life might feel unworthy of salvation, and how could you share this hope with them?
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## Point 2: Believers Are Instantly with Jesus After They Die

**Scripture Reading:** Direct someone to read **2 Corinthians 5:8 (CSB):**

*“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*

**Summary:**

Jesus’ word “today” assures believers they’ll be with Him immediately after death, not in “soul-sleep” or separation. This promise comforts us, especially at funerals, and reflects Jesus’ sacrifice to keep us close (2 Cor 5:8). It’s a reason to invite others to know this hope.

**Discussion Questions for Point 2:**

1. How does knowing believers are instantly with Jesus after death shape your view of death or your approach to comforting others?
  2. The sermon suggests inviting people to Easter to share this hope. How might this promise of being with Jesus encourage someone you know to explore faith?
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## Point 3: It’s Not Too Late to Put Your Trust in Him

**Scripture Reading:** Direct someone to read **Isaiah 55:6-7 (CSB):**

*“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call to him while he is near. Let the wicked one abandon his way and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will freely forgive.”*

**Summary:**

The criminal’s last-minute faith, “Jesus, remember me,” secured salvation, proving it’s never too late to trust Jesus. His imperfect faith didn’t disqualify him; Jesus judges sincerity. Isaiah 55:6-7 urges seeking God now, as hearts harden over time, reinforcing the urgency of faith.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does the criminal’s simple plea teach us about the power of asking for mercy, even at the end?
  2. The sermon warns against delaying faith, noting hearts grow harder with age. How can we encourage someone hesitant to trust Jesus now?
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## Recap of the Lesson

Jesus' words, "Today you will be with me in paradise," offer hope: salvation is for anyone, believers are with Jesus right after death, and it's never too late to trust Him. The criminal's story shows God's grace reaches even the unlikely, at any moment, turning death into eternal life with Christ. This hope inspires us to share Jesus, especially at Easter.

## Challenge Based on the Text

*This week, pray for and invite one person to Easter service. Grab an invite card, write their name, and pray for a chance to share Jesus' hope—maybe over a meal or chat. Like the criminal, they might be one step from paradise.*

***You can obtain invitation cards from the church office for your group while they last.***