

Turn with me this morning to the gospel of Luke, chapter 23, verses 1-43. The context of this chapter is at the end of Jesus' three and half year ministry which began as He was baptized and consecrated into the priesthood as the great high priest by his cousin, John the Baptist. He had already fulfilled scripture by riding into Jerusalem on a colt, as the people cried out, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord." He had already wept over Jerusalem, and had cleansed the temple for the second time. The year was approximately 30 A.D., and Jesus had answered the testing questions of chief priests with authority knowing they were trying to trap Him. He had told the parable of the wicked tenants that killed the son of the vineyard owner, and then interpreted it as He said, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" Jesus had answered the scribes and chief priests as they had tried to lay hands on him with their tricky question of whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not. Jesus had answered the questions of the Sadducees about the resurrection, saying, "Luk 20:38 Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him." He had questioned the Sadducees in return, showing David had called the Christ Lord. He had warned both the people and his disciples of the scribes. He foretold the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. He had told them **Luk 21:27 they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.**

Then the chief priests and scribes devised a plot with Judas, whom Satan had entered, to betray Jesus when a crowd wasn't around. They would do this during the Feast of Unleavened bread, the very week of Passover. Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples and instituted the Lord's Supper saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." The disciples had argued over who would be the greatest, and Jesus had told Peter that he would deny him three times. Jesus had gone out to the Mount of Olives to pray. Judas had come with a kiss, and brought a small army with him. Jesus had made peace by healing a cut off ear. Then Jesus was taken and mocked and beaten. He was brought before the council of high priests and scribes and while there He said, **Luk 22:69 But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.**" This is the context of Luke 23. Though we have read it earlier, I want you to think through it again and as I read it, focus on Pilate's question to Christ. "Are you the King?"

Luk 23:1 Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate.

Luk 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king."

Luk 23:3 And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." Luk 23:4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."

Luk 23:5 But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place." Luk 23:6 When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

Luk 23:7 And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. Luk 23:8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. Luk 23:9 So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer.

Luk 23:10 The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.

Luk 23:11 And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. Luk 23:12 And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

Luk 23:13 Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

Luk 23:14 and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against

him. Luk 23:15 Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. Luk 23:16 I will therefore punish and release him.”

After our study through revelation, this questioning by Pilate will always make me think of the rider on the white horse which is the great answer to Pilate’s question to Jesus, *Are you the King of the Jews?*

Rev 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

Rev 19:12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. Rev 19:13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood,

Not by chance, after Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, Herod sent him back to Pilate *arraying him in splendid clothing*, in a robe that would have soaked up the blood from wounds sustained in His beatings.

Revelation continues ...

and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. Rev 19:14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. Rev 19:15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. Rev 19:16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

There is your answer Pilate. Not just the King of the Jews, but King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Picking back up in verse 18....

Luk 23:18 But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—

Luk 23:19 a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. Luk 23:20 Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus,

Luk 23:21 but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”

Luk 23:22 A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.”

Luk 23:23 But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. Luk 23:24 So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.

Luk 23:25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

Luk 23:26 And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.

Luk 23:27 And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. Luk 23:28 But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

Luk 23:29 For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’

Luk 23:30 Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’

Luk 23:31 For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Luk 23:32 Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.

Luk 23:33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, (Golgotha or Calvary) there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

Luk 23:34 And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to

divide his garments.

Notice the timing of this. Jesus would have been laid down on the cross and had his hands and feet nailed through before they dropped the pole into the ground. This is when he says, **Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**

Spurgeon: **this crucified criminal was startled and astonished as he heard him say, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” He himself, probably, had met his executioners with a curse; but he heard this man breathe a prayer to the great Father;**

M. Henry commented on our Lord’s Prayer: If Christ loved and prayed for such enemies, what enemies can we have, whom we are not obliged to love and pray for?

Who is the first person that comes to mind when you hear the word enemy. Pray for them.

The Biblical Museum tells this story: When the cholera first broke out in Hungary, in 1831, the Slavic peasants of the north were fully persuaded they had been poisoned by the nobles, to get rid of them. Hence they rose in revolt, and committed the most dreadful excesses. One gentleman was seized by the peasants of a village, among whom he had, up to that moment, been exceedingly popular; he was dragged from his home to the public streets, and beaten several hours, to make him confess where he had concealed the poison. At last, weary with inflicting blows, they carried him to the smith, and applied hot ploughshares to his feet at three different times. As the poor man, exhausted with this dreadful torture, and finding all entreaties and explanations vain, fell back from weakness, and was apparently about to expire, these beautiful words of our dying Saviour escaped his lips: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”. As if by a miracle, the savage fury of the peasantry was calmed. Struck with the innocence of the victim and the enormity of their crime, they fled and concealed themselves.

Luk 23:35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!”

The mocking was very sarcastic, and so you get their sarcasm, remember what Jesus’ name means....”Yahweh saves”. They were saying “Yahweh saves” has saved others, let him save himself. Let “Yahweh saves” save himself.

Luk 23:36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine

Luk 23:37 and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” A person would offer wine to a King, but again, they are only mocking Yahweh saves. The irony of this is that Yahweh saves planned to save sinners by not saving himself. He had to go to the tree to save His people from their sins.

Luk 23:38 There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

Mathew says it a little different, **“This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”**, and John says, **“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”** Why are there three different readings from each gospel? Well, John explains that it was written three times because it **was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.** There is power in the words written on the cross. Did the thief see and read these as they nailed Jesus to his pole and then put it down into the hole, or maybe he could turn enough to see it as He hung on the cross.

The scripture is incomparable to any written words of men. Many before us have understood this and strived to keep God's word before the eyes of the people as God's word is powerful to save. One of my favorite examples is J. C. Ryle who was the vicar of the parish church of all saints in Stradbroke, England. He is described as the formidable J. C. Ryle, a well known protestant evangelical. He had an enthusiasm for plastering any available space with quotations from the Bible. He is also known for his ...

Gospel Warnings by J.C. Ryle

1. Substitute anything for Christ, and the Gospel is totally spoiled!
2. Add anything to Christ, and the Gospel ceases to be a pure Gospel!
3. Put anything between a person and Christ, and that person will neglect Christ for that very thing!

All Saints, Stradbroke



As you enter....



As you exit...



As you enter the long narrow church building in Stradbroke, there are three narrow cross beam rafters above your head. On each Ryle had written a scripture. The first one I haven't found a picture of yet, but second one says, "Search the scriptures, prove all things.", and the third one says: "Create in me a clean heart O God".

After you sit down to worship, your gaze takes you to the white archway above the pulpit at the front which also has a verse you look at during the entire sermon: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved".

Then after the service as you stand up to walk out you see the other sides of the arches. The verses as you depart say, "We have an advocate with the Father", then the second beam, "We have redemption through His son", and the third and last one you see, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate".

On the pulpit, where only the pastor can see it, is written, "Woe to me if I preach not the gospel".

The thief on the cross didn't have near this much scripture to gaze at. But perhaps he did see, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Spurgeon asks if the thief would have thought of Old testament truths he could have learned in his life such as the prophet Isaiah, "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "Why," he would say to himself, "I never understood that passage in the prophet Isaiah before, but it must point to him. The chastisement of our peace is upon him. Can this be he who cried in the Psalms — 'they pierced my hands and my feet'?"

Luk 23:39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Luke describes him as a criminal, a malefactor the King James says, a lawless man. Sin is lawlessness. This man was condemned as a lawless one. He had no regard for man's law, and thus it is easy to see he had no regard for God's law.

Luk 23:40 But the other (criminal) rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"

So when the thief says to his counterpart on the other side of Jesus, Do you not fear God?, he is saying that even though it is obvious you don't care about the law, don't you at least fear God who created you and is your judge as you are dying right now and will face Him very soon!

Jesus was dying. The thief was dying. What do men do while they are near death? For the small number of people I have been around when they were dying or thought they were dying, there is an undeniable soberness about them. Perhaps you can laugh off the thought of judgment if you are not facing death, but when you are seemingly very close to meeting your Creator and judge, what is coming is inescapable and should sober you quickly. Some of you are very young and don't think this soberness about the fear of God is anything you need to worry about. But you don't know the length of your days. My wife and I were at a memorial service yesterday for a girl that was in our Sunday school class that died at the age of 21. No matter your age, you should be very sober concerning the fear of the Lord. Henry: the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked (by this he means the worst of the worst) is that they have not the fear of God before their eyes.

Don't buy the lie that you will have time later. Some have even used this dying thief as an excuse or example of waiting to deal with their maker, thinking they will have a last chance as this one next to Jesus did. Don't presume upon God dear friend. The start of the last chapter of Ecclesiastes tells you to remember...

Ecc 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come

Henry: In the two thieves are represented the different effects which the cross of Christ would have upon the children of men in the preaching of the gospel. The cross of Christ is to some a savor of life unto life, to others of death unto death. Here one of the malefactors hardened to the last. The other softened at the last. Some think that they both reviled him at first, till the heart of one of them was wonderfully changed. This malefactor, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of Divine mercy.

Luk 23:41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

Henry: True penitents acknowledge the justice of God in all the punishments of their sins.

Now we come to the verse that includes the sermon title.

Luk 23:42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

John Macarthur: There are so many ironies at Calvary. Here is Jesus being mocked because he can't save anyone and he can't save himself, saving a thief by not saving himself. Jesus is accused of claiming to be a King, a threat to the power of Rome, he must be crucified before he can lead a revolt, yet by the same people he is mocked and scorned and ridiculed as impotent and helpless. He is treated like a King in sarcastically cruel jest, yet in reality He is God's true King. He is accused of blasphemy against God by those who blaspheme Him, the true God. So the blasphemers accuse the one being blasphemed of blasphemy. He, the innocent and righteous, is executed by the guilty. He is cursed by His enemies who hate him, but cursed in an infinitely greater way by his father who loves Him. He appears unable to save Himself or anyone else, yet being unwilling to save Himself, becomes the Savior of the world. He is the one who gives life, who is life, who is dying, that those who are dead might receive life.

Henry: This is the prayer of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour.

G Campbell Morgan: he had suddenly discovered that there was another Throne, higher than the throne of the Caesars, another realm where there was a Father, Who could extend mercy.

You can easily observe both repentance and faith in the dying thief. Repentance when he says we receive the due reward for our deeds. Faith when he says, Remember me when you come into your Kingdom. True conversion will always have both faith in Christ and repentance of sins.

Spurgeon spoke against the idea of this passage being used to encourage a sinner to: **delay repentance:**

It cannot be properly turned to such a purpose: it might be used as an encouragement to thieving just as much as to the delay of repentance..... "He makes a great point. This passage doesn't teach anyone to delay in coming to Christ until the end of their life, anymore than it is teaching you to become a thief.

The fact is, there is nothing so good that men can't pervert it into evil, if they have evil hearts: the justice of God is made a motive for despair, and his mercy an argument for sin. Wicked men will drown themselves in the rivers of truth as readily as in the pools of error. He that has a mind to destroy himself can choke his soul with the Bread of life, or dash himself in pieces against the Rock of ages.

Spurgeon: if I stood by the bedside of a dying man tonight, and I found him anxious about his soul, but fearful that Christ could not save him because repentance had been put off so late, I should certainly quote the dying thief to him, and I should do it with good conscience, and without hesitation. I should tell him that, though he was as near to dying as the thief upon the cross was, yet, if he repented of his sin, and turned his face to Christ believingly, he would find eternal life. I should do this with all my heart, rejoicing that I had such a story to tell to one at the gates of eternity.

Henry: We shall see the case to be extraordinary, if we observe the extraordinary operations of God's grace upon him. One minute the criminal curses, the next he begs to be remembered.

Spurgeon: Dwell upon this fact, if you please, and note its practical bearing upon the cases of many around us. There are many among my hearers who have been instructed from their childhood, who have been admonished, and warned, and entreated, and invited, and yet they have not come to Christ; while this man, without any of these advantages, nevertheless believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and found eternal life. O you that have lived under the sound of the gospel from your childhood, the thief does not comfort you, but he accuses you! What are you doing to abide so long in unbelief? Will you never believe the testimony of divine love? What more shall I say to you? What more can anyone say to you?

The prayer of a sinner to the Saviour can be just as simple as the thief said it...

Luk 23:42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

So where did the thief learn to pray, "Remember me"? Was it just a spur of the moment reaction to the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit? Certainly! But could there also have been gracious memories granted to this man in his upbringing that were used by God for his glory in this prayer to the Christ?

In looking at Old Testament passages, the request or prayer "remember me" is used by several Old Testament saints and I think it's possible the thief may have known about these prayers so that it came to mind for him to pray likewise. The first that was ever brought to my attention was back years ago when Doug was preaching through Genesis. He was preaching in a chapter that had a chiasm and in the center was this request, "remember me". Do you remember who made the request? This requester had been talking to two men condemned to prison, awaiting their judgment. Both men served the king of the land. Both men had dreams. Both men were troubled and down casted because they didn't know what the dreams meant. Both men told their dream to this requester who had been set over them by the captain of the guard. Both dreams had three items, the first: three branches, the second: three baskets. Both men had their dreams interpreted. Both items of three were interpreted to mean three days. I said the word, "both", seven times. These parallels pointed to a definite middle of the text which was this man's request, "remember me". So the question in this sermon was why would this

little phrase, “remember me”, be the main point of the text, and what could it be pointing us towards? As often the case with chiasms, the point is Christ. As we read the Old Testament we should watch for anything that would point us to the Lord Jesus Christ. This story of Joseph was a shadow of the day on Calvary. It was a type of what was to come. Both thieves on the crosses were condemned by the authorities. Both thieves on the cross deserved death. Both thieves were no doubt troubled and down cast. Both thieves heard Jesus forgive the men that nailed his hands and feet to the pole.

But in both stories, the parallel eventually ended. The Butler was restored to Pharaoh’s side as cup bearer, but the Baker was hanged, perhaps on a tree. The thieves went separate ways as well. One continued to hurl insults and mockery upon the Lord Jesus as they both hung dying. But the other thief rebuked his counterpart, repented by admitting they were both getting what they deserved, defended the innocence of Jesus, and then turned in faith to pray, “Lord, remember me” to the Lord Jesus.

This first Old Testament appearance of “remember me” was a request in Genesis 40 by Joseph to the Butler, not a prayer to the Lord. Just as Jesus was between two thieves, Joseph was beholding two men scared for their lives. Just like the thieves, one was condemned while the other was restored. It is a fascinating shadow of the cross that points us to Luke 23. Perhaps the thief had heard this story. It’s very possible he could have, but if not, maybe he had heard a different one. The rest of the “remember me” quotes we will look at are all prayers from Old Testament saints to God. I believe these prayers can strengthen our faith and increase our awe of God’s written word pointing us towards the Lord Jesus.

Another Old Testament saint to pray, “remember me”, was in great agony and pain, just as the thief on the cross was. He had lost greatly. He had sorrows dropped on him one right after another. He had lost all ten of his children to a great wind that struck the four corners of the house they were eating and drinking in and the house fell upon the young people, and they died. He lost his oxen and donkeys, his sheep and camels, and all his servants except the four that came carrying this bitter news. This also mirrors our story in several ways. All of the thief’s earthly possessions were lost to him as he went to the cross. All of Christ’s disciples had deserted Him; all the crowd falsely accused him and chanted crucify, crucify Him! The chief priests and scribes vehemently accused Him, while the soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked him.

The Old Testament saint was Job. Eventually, God would speak to Job out of the whirlwind, and tell him about Behemoth and Leviathan until Job (the creature) repented before His Creator. Job said **therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes**. But before this ending of the story while Job was in the midst of the pain and suffering (like the thief), he said this is in ...

Job 14:13 Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! Perhaps the thief on the cross remembered this prayer.

Our third Old Testament character to pray “remember me” has more parallels to the Lord Jesus than any of the others to pray this prayer. His parents were visited by the Angel of the Lord when his mom was barren. Jesus, the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament was the one who told her “behold, you shall conceive and bear a son”. Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel when she was a virgin, and told,

“behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.”, so both had miracle births. Jesus, as the angel of the Lord, also said this about the son that would come to this barren mother, “he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines”. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and told him, “you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

The son of the barren woman went to Gaza and while he was there, learned of a plot in the city to kill him at dawn. So at midnight, he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron. According to Josephus, the distance he carried the gate and posts was over 20 miles.

When Peter confessed to Jesus, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered this confession by telling Peter He would build His church on that very confession, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Matt. 16:16-18

In John Gill’s commentary he says this son of a barren woman was an emblem of Christ’s resurrection, as Christ was encompassed in a sepulchre, and sealed and watched by soldiers, but broke through the bars of death and the grave, and carried off the doors in triumph; and in a short time ascended to heaven, whereby he declared himself to be the Son of God with power. Gill continues that It was usual for doors and bars of gates to be carried in triumph, and laid up in temples (w); and the Jews say these doors carried were not less than sixty cubits (90 feet).

Not only a picture of Christ’s resurrection, but the carrying of the gates also remind me of when,

They took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull. John 19:17

This son of a barren woman was betrayed by the woman he loved, for 1,200 pieces of silver. Jesus was betrayed by Judas with a kiss, for 30 pieces of silver.

This son of a barren woman judged Israel for 20 years. Jesus is the judge of all, the judge of the living and the dead.

After his betrayal, they gouged out the eyes of the barren woman’s son and mocked him. Likewise, the soldiers beat the Lord Jesus and mocked him.

The son of the barren woman willingly gave his life between two pillars. Jesus willingly gave his life between two thieves.

Samson, this son of the barren woman, prayed “O Lord GOD, please remember me”, as He died saving his people from the Philistines. Jesus, received the prayer of the thief, “Lord , remember me”, as He died to save His people from their sins.

Samson’s name means “sunlight”. Jesus is the “Son” of God, the light of the world.

But there is more to notice about Samson's prayer. When Samson says, "Lord God", the Hebrew words used here do not translate as "Yahweh Elohim" as they most commonly do in the scripture. To give you an idea of the usage, 15 times in Judges when "Lord God" is used, it does mean "Yahweh Elohim, but not here in Samson's prayer.

In **Judges 16:28** it says, **Then Samson called to the LORD and said, "O Lord GOD, please remember me.** "Lord" isn't the same word both times. So if you fill in the names in Hebrew for this verse, it reads, then Samson called to Yahweh, and said, "O Adonai Yehovih" please remember me. This convinces me Samson's prayer was directed to the same person as the thief directed his duplicate prayer. They were both praying to the Lord Jesus. Samson's prayer was to Christ.

As a side note, all three other times Adonai Yehovih is used in Judges are also referring to the Angel of the Lord. Two were in chapter six when Jesus, the Angel of the Lord sat under an oak tree and appeared to Gideon, and Gideon says in...

Jdg 6:15 And he said to him, "Please, Lord (Adonai), how can I save Israel? And

Jdg 6:22 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the LORD. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord GOD (O Adonai Yehovih)! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."

The third usage of Adonai is in Judges and is by Samson's own father, Manoah in...

Jdg 13:8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD (Yahweh) and said, "O Lord(O Adonai), please let the man of God (Elohim) whom you sent come again to us and teach us what we are to do with the child who will be born."

He was asking for Yahweh to send the Angel of the Lord back to him and his wife again. These three uses of Adonai really set the stage for our parallel verse to the thief on the cross praying to Jesus.

Jdg 16:28 Then Samson called to the LORD (Yahweh) and said, "O Lord GOD(O Adonai Yehovih), please **remember me** and please strengthen me only this once, O God(Elohim), that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes."

Could this famous prayer of Samson have come to the mind of the thief on the cross when he prayed "remember me"? Whether or not this is the case, the book of Judges points us to Christ and we should watch for these parallels as we read our Old Testament to see these great shadows of Christ's work that come clearly to light in the book of Luke. Remember that just one chapter after we are told about the thief's prayer, Jesus tells two other disciples on the road to Emmaus...

Luk 24:27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And

Luk 24:44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." **Luk 24:45** Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, **Luk 24:46** and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

These passages confirm that we should be looking for Christ as we read our Old Testament.

Back to our thief; If not in the stories of Joseph or Job, or Samson, perhaps the thief had heard the prayer in another place. Maybe he remembered the story of the one zealous for the law of God. After finding out the sin of the priest, he threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber in the courts of the house of God. Do you see a parallel with Jesus? Jesus, would cleanse the temple not only once, but twice during his earthly ministry. This saint brought the tithe (or first fruits) into the storehouses. This saint confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? He was zealous to honor the Lord on the Sabbath day, to cleanse them from foreign women, to provide the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits. This points to Jesus in 1Co 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. Because of Jesus, Heb 4:9 there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, Heb 4:10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. This Old Testament saint we read this morning for the law. Perhaps it was Nehemiah’s prayers that the thief remembered....

Neh 13:14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.

Neh 13:31 and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

It could have been the prayers of David in

Psa 25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! Or....

Psa 106:4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them,

It could have been the prayer of Jeremiah who like Jesus was persecuted and bore reproach....

Jer 15:15 O LORD, you know; remember me and visit me,

But no matter how the prayer came to the mind of that thief, he is a brother in Christ to us now. We may pass food with him at the marriage supper of the Lamb. I bet Jesus’ kind response to Him is what he remembers now.....

Luk 23:43 And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Spurgeon: From whose lips could it come but from the lips of a divine Being? Such a loving, forgiving, Godlike prayer, proved him to be the Messiah. Who else had ever prayed so? Certainly not David and the kings of Israel, who, on the contrary, in all honesty and heartiness imprecated the wrath of God upon their enemies.

M. Henry: Christ upon the cross is like Christ upon the throne. In Christ’s darkest moment, ironically just before the next verse that tells of darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, Christ declares the best proclamation that any of us could hope for. He pronounces pardon upon this thief and promises him paradise. The beauty of this proclamation is it is still true for sinners like me and you. Anyone who will repent of their sins and pray “remember me” to the Lord Jesus will be saved. All who

will trust in, rely on, believe in, rest in, or hope in Christ alone apart from their dirty works, just as this thief did, will one day go to be with the Lord Jesus Christ in paradise.

G. Campbell Morgan says this about Paradise. It is the region of Sheol or of Hades (the Greek word for Sheol), where are the spirits of the just made perfect.

You see, the thief believed in the super natural. He believed Christ had a Kingdom after death that he wanted to be a part of when he died. Perhaps this thief was one of the very last to go to Sheol, or perhaps he was one of the very first to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, since Jesus died before him and could have already emptied the paradise part of Hades, ransoming the captives, and leading them in a train to heaven, where He took His place on the right hand of the Father, and waited for the thief to join. We can be assured either way that we will see the thief in heaven some day.

Miriam LeFevre Crouse has written an interesting poem on this incident; "Three men shared death upon a hill", But only one man dies, the other two---A thief and God Himself made rendezvous."

The group Acappella sings:

Well it was many years ago in the time of the Bible that they took him up to Calvary
They could have let Him go, but instead they chose Barabus just to set another criminal free
When they crucified the ever loving, caring Master with compassion flowing from his eyes
Well, he said to a thief who was begging him for mercy that "today you'll live in paradise."

Chorus:

And I'm saved like the criminal on the cross
Praise God I'm saved, no more to suffer loss
Well, He said I'd live in Paradise and he's taken care of the cost
Hallelujah! I'm saved like the criminal on the cross

My favorite hymn referring to this passage was the one that broke out impromptu at Charles Spurgeon's funeral....

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in His day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away:

Let's pray...