
SUNDAY

*Today, you will be with me
in Paradise*

March 16, 2025

“Therefore I will give him a
portion among the great,
and he will divide the
spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his
life unto death,
and was numbered with
the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for
the transgressors."

Isaiah 53:12

Jesus died between two
criminals.

Insurrectionists.

Terrorists.

Or worse.

We recoil at this idea- that the God-man would come to such an end. Between some of the worst people of his time.

But in truth, this is what God had to do to come close to us. He had to get comfortable in proximity to sinners. There was no other way.

Sinners like those criminals on the crosses next to Him. Sinners like me. And you.

In this season of Lent, we
recognize that there is the
greatest possible difference
between US and Jesus.

And we consider, with awe,
that He came anyway.

Today, spend some time
thanking Jesus that He draws
near to people like me and
you- no matter what we have
done. Spend some time
praising Him for His great
desire to draw near to us.

MONDAY

*Today, you will be with me
in Paradise*

March 17, 2025

"One of the criminals who
hung there hurled insults at
him:

"Aren't you the Messiah?
Save yourself and us!"

Luke 23:39

Two criminals hung next to
Jesus. One joined in the
jeering.

He looked at Jesus and could
not see a Messiah.

Surely a Messiah wouldn't
come to such an end.

The Messiah was supposed to overthrow Rome.

The Messiah was supposed to dominate every other world power.

The Messiah was to achieve the highest heights of victory and success.

And death on a Roman cross
was not on this man's
Messiah Bingo card.

“Like this thief, we do not see any sign of Jesus’ power in this crucifixion.

How could the Son of Gd allow himself to be caught in this horrible situation? Most of us would not want to be connected to anything so shameful.”

Fleming Rutledge,
The Seven Last Words from the Cross

As we make our way through Lent, pause to consider the faulty expectations you have of how a Messiah should act. Consider how you sometimes want to distance yourself from what Jesus does and asks of us.

*Confess this to Jesus and ask
Him to help you see Him as
He really is, and be molded
into His true likeness.*

TUESDAY

*Today, you will be with me
in Paradise*

March 18, 2025

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

Luke 23: 42

I wonder what this man really thought Jesus could help him with.

Was he hoping Jesus could rescue him from the cross even at that late hour? Surely not.

Or did he somehow glimpse
the divine in Jesus? Did he
recognize what so many
missed- that Jesus was
indeed God in the flesh?

Was he asking for help with
“whatever comes next”?

Whatever he's asking, it is clear that unlike the other criminal, this man knows he is in need AND he somehow knows that Jesus can help him.

*As we make our way through
Lent, let's ask Jesus to help
us be like this man. To ask
for His help, even when we're
not totally sure we
understand what He is up to.*

WEDNESDAY

*Today, you will be with me
in Paradise*

March 19, 2025

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

Luke 23: 42

Remember. When someone asks God to remember in the Bible, it is asking God to act on their behalf.

Save me. Rescue me. Deliver me. Defeat my enemies.

This man was asking Jesus to act on his behalf. He knew he needed help, and somehow, he knew that Jesus could help him.

This man is a great model for us as we walk through the season of Lent.

As we journey through Lent in a posture of confession, what we're essentially doing is focusing on how much we need help, and how Jesus is the only one who can help us.

We're contemplating our
great need for God to
"remember" us- to act on our
behalf.

To forgive us, restore us,
heal us, make us new.

Today, pray the prayer of the criminal on the cross, "Jesus, remember me."

Confess your need for Jesus' help, grace, forgiveness, and power.

THURSDAY

*Today, you will be with me
in Paradise*

March 20, 2025

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

Luke 23: 42

"When you come into your Kingdom..."

I wonder what kind of Kingdom this man thought Jesus was coming into?

Surely he was not considering an earthly kingdom. Jesus was hanging on a cross- any prospect for the expected overthrow of Rome was out of the question.

It's possible this man
understood what few others
had totally grasped.

That even though it looked,
by all earthly measurements,
that Jesus' mission had
ended in defeat... there was
more to come.

Maybe this man understood
what the Roman centurion
would declare hours later:

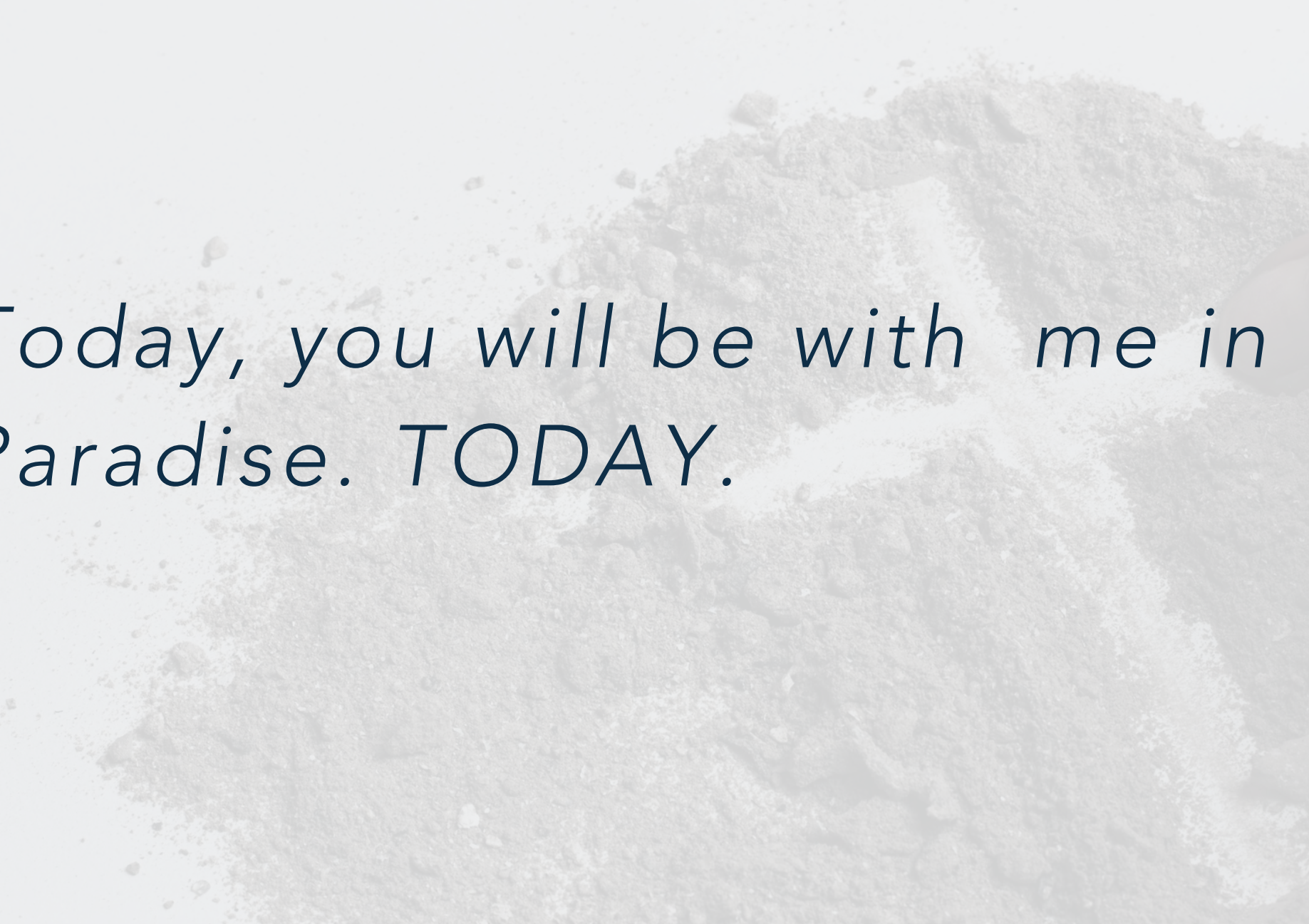
"Surely this man is the Son of
God."

Today, ask God to help you believe that His Kingdom is still actively coming and victorious, even when by all earthly measurements, it's hard to see it.

FRIDAY

*Today, you will be with me
in Paradise*

March 21, 2025



*Today, you will be with me in
Paradise. TODAY.*

Whatever this man was asking for help with, it is likely he was thinking about "tomorrow." Later.

Maybe that "sweet someday" when God remakes creation into something new.

But Jesus surprises him with
that word- today.

Without hesitation, without
delay. You'll be with me
today.

What a promise to make to a
man in the grips of one of
the most painful deaths
imaginable.

Although sometimes, we do have to wait to see how Jesus might answer our prayers, the gift of being WITH Jesus is available right now, today.

Spend some time today
thanking Jesus that He is
with you right now, even as
you wait to see how He will
answer your prayers.

SATUDAY

*Today, you will be with me
in Paradise*

March 22, 2025

Paradise. Today, right now,
you'll be with me in paradise.

The word for paradise comes from an Iranian word meaning "garden." The Garden of Eden was described with this word. So 'paradise' points to God's intention in His relationship with humanity: togetherness.

William H. Willimon
describes paradise this way:

*"Paradise is whenever,
wherever you are with Jesus."*

*Of course we believe that
when Jesus returns and when
we have passed beyond the
limits of this world, this
“being with Jesus” will be
much more beautiful.*

*But the fact remains that
Jesus has promised paradise
TODAY.*

Jesus promises this man what
He promimses to us:

He will be with us. And that
wherever we find HIM,
wherever we are WITH Him,
we are experiencing
Paradise. God with us.

Today, ask God to help you experience the reality of Paradise- being in His presence- in the here and now. Not only as a hoped for "someday" expectation, but as a current reality we can participate in.
