

2026-03-08 Points

Title: The Two Thieves: Contrasting Paths to Salvation

Sermon Summary: This sermon challenges the modern consumer mentality in American Christianity that seeks the easiest path to salvation. Using the contrast between the thief on the cross and Zacchaeus (described as "the thief in the tree"), the pastor emphasizes that true salvation involves more than a simple acknowledgment of Christ. While Jesus could forgive freely during His earthly ministry, His will and testament now requires genuine repentance, transformation, and a willingness to hear God's word and put it into practice. The sermon warns against presumptuous faith that asks "what's the least I can do?" instead of "how much can I do for Christ?" True salvation produces radical life change, evidenced by brokenness, repentance, and a willingness to sacrifice for the Kingdom. The message calls believers to display Christ through their lives rather than merely claim His name, emphasizing that salvation is not just about getting to heaven but about being transformed to live for Jesus daily.

Key Points:

- True disciples are those who hear God's word AND put it into practice (Luke 8:19-21)
- Many will try to enter heaven but will not be able because they presumed upon salvation without genuine transformation (Luke 13:22-30)
- American Christianity has adopted a consumer mentality seeking comfort rather than transformation
- The thief on the cross is often misused to justify minimal commitment, but Jesus was alive and could forgive as He chose
- After Christ's death, His will (testament) went into effect, establishing requirements for salvation
- Salvation requires repentance (brokenness), then confession, then forgiveness—not shortcuts
- Self-righteousness versus true righteousness is demonstrated in the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector
- Zacchaeus represents radical conversion: climbing a tree (humiliation), welcoming Jesus gladly, giving half his possessions to the poor, and

repaying those he wronged four times over

- True conversion involves a moment of brokenness where we recognize we killed Christ with our sins
- We should seek to be motivated by gratitude for salvation rather than fear of hell
- Daily dying to self is required, not a one-time decision

Scripture Reference:

- Luke 8:19-21 (Jesus' mother and brothers; those who hear God's word and put it into practice)
- Luke 13:22-30 (the narrow door; many will try to enter but will not be able)
- Luke 18:9-14 (parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector)
- Luke 19:1-10 (Zacchaeus the tax collector)
- John 10 (Jesus as the Good Shepherd who calls His sheep by name)
- Hebrews 2 (ignoring such a great salvation)
- Romans 8 (all creation groaning, waiting for sons of God to be revealed)

Stories:

- The woman who anointed Jesus' feet with tears and oil (referenced from previous week)
- David and Goliath (the underdog defeating the giant)
- The 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team (Miracle on Ice) as an underdog story
- The football player whose blind father could finally "see" him play after death
- The prodigal son (referenced briefly regarding repentance and restoration)
- Zacchaeus climbing the sycamore tree to see Jesus and his radical transformation
- The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple
- The thief on the cross (contrasted with Zacchaeus)
- Peter's denial and restoration (Satan sifting like wheat)
- Nicodemus seeking Jesus (referenced)
- The recovery group meeting at the church (contemporary illustration of overcoming addiction)