

## The Last Shall Be First

### Scripture Reading — Luke 23:39-43

*“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*

... “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

—Luke 23:42-43 —

Paradise is something we all dream about. A place without pain, tears, loneliness, boredom, and death—that’s where I want to go.

But only good people will go there, right?

Not according to the good news of Jesus. Paradise is a gift for everyone who sincerely responds to Jesus with the words, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Surprisingly, these are the words of a violent revolutionary, a terrorist. But of the few words that Jesus utters from the cross, the longest dialogue is between that criminal and Jesus. In fact, Jesus’ last conversation on earth is with that convicted prisoner. And Jesus promises that they will soon meet again in paradise.

Even in his deepest pain Jesus reserved a place in his heart for the underdog and marginalized. In paradise, as Jesus taught, the first shall be last and the last first. This helps us see other people differently, doesn’t it?

I like the word “today.” The where and what of life after death are so fuzzy that we wonder what it will all be like. But Jesus says, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” The criminal’s death and his entrance into paradise happen on the same day. What comfort these words give!

Jesus wants to tell us too, “You will be with me in paradise.”

### Prayer

*Lord, my simple prayer is this: “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”  
Thank you, Jesus. Amen.*

**Devotion topics:** [Bible](#), [Christianity](#), [Salvation](#)

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Written by Dean Deppe — <https://today.reframemedia.com/authors/dean-deppe>

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