

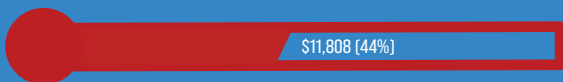
## CHURCH STATISTICS

April 2, 2023

Budget: \$5,800  
 Contribution: \$6,361  
 Benevolence: \$90  
 Attendance: 109

----- SPECIAL MISSIONS CONTRIBUTION -----

Phase One Goal: \$27,000 | **COMPLETED** ✓  
 Phase Two Goal: \$27,000 | Due April 23



## WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS WEEK?

APR  
10

Easter Monday

APR  
12

Men's Midweek  
 York University @ 7:30 PM

APR  
14

Campus Devotional  
 Toronto Metropolitan U @ 7:30 PM

APR  
16

Sunday Worship Service  
 Elia Middle School @ 10:00 AM

### FUTURE EVENTS

APR 19 Women's Midweek  
 APR 21 Congregational Devotional  
 APR 23 Sunday Worship Service  
 \*\* Phase Two Missions Goal Due \*\*  
 APR 26 Men's Midweek  
 APR 28 Campus Devotional  
 APR 28 Singles Devotional  
 APR 29 ICCM Session  
 APR 30 Sunday Worship Service  
 May 3 Women's Midweek

## BIBLE TALKS / CONTACT INFO

**CENTRAL REGION:** Evan & Kelly Bartholomew (905) 699-4809 / (905) 699-4806

Mature Singles/Marrieds (OASIS): Ghislain Normand & Elizabeth Wademan (365) 724-2114 / (647) 860-3113

Single Professionals (Living Water): Rich Chan & Valentina Lobo (647) 562-8333 / (647) 527-1431

Ryerson University (Level Up): Dylan Hoerner & Isabella Raudales-Montes (416) 894-3601 / (438) 334-4871

Ryerson University (Next Gen): Nero Cabatuando & Zonya Charles (416) 318-6421 / (647) 916-3259

**YORK REGION:** Kirk & Margie Hamula (647) 806-2576 / (647) 906-9481

Mature Singles/Marrieds (One In The Spirit): Tony & Vita Ventura (416) 904-0958 / (416) 904-0959

Single Professionals: Joshua Groves & Da-Shara Quant (647) 425-9632 / (647) 648-6125

York University (One): Isaiah & Elizabeth Famurewa (647) 785-9969 / (647) 514-2319

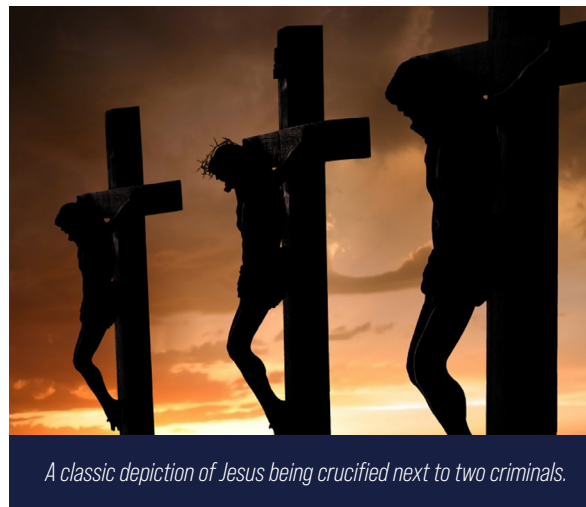
York University (Two): William Koroluk & Patrina Gosine (403) 669-2250 / (647) 395-1124



# CONVERTING THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

SUNDAY BULLETIN

APRIL 9, 2023



A classic depiction of Jesus being crucified next to two criminals.

"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43)

Welcome to our Easter Sunday Service! All of Christianity centres around the approximate six hours that Jesus hung on an old wooden cross. During this time, Jesus was only able to utter seven short statements. In these statements, He forgave the guards who were gambling for His seamless garments, He ensured that His mother would be looked after by one of His most trusted disciples, He expressed discomfort and pain because all of



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(905) 699-4809

TORONTOICC@GMAIL.COM

TORONTOICC.ORG

mankind's sin had separated Him from His father, and He committed His spirit into God's hands. Perhaps the most powerful of these seven statements, though, is Jesus' words to one of the criminals crucified with Him: **"Today, you will be with me in Paradise."**



*Isa, Kelly, and Sarah travelled to Syracuse to preach and encourage the women for Women's Day!*

First off, let's set the record straight. It is assumed that since this thief was not baptized before he received a promise of salvation, individuals today do not need to be baptized to be saved either. This crucial misconception is simply untrue. We can understand very clearly why the thief on the cross was not baptized by merely looking at Jesus' words to a skeptical crowd as He healed a paralyzed man. He said, **"But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So He said to the paralyzed man, 'Get up, take your mat and go home.' Then the man got up and went home."** (Matthew 9:6-7)

The purpose of baptism is to forgive sins. (Acts 2:38) It is not possible to be saved without forgiveness because it is our sin that separates us from God. (Isaiah 59:1-2) However, Jesus had the unique ability and authority to forgive people's sins while He was on earth. Clearly, Jesus is not physically walking on earth any longer. So what happened to that authority? In His final words to His disciples, as recorded by Matthew, He

said, **"All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..."** (Matthew 28:18-19) Jesus exercises His authority to forgive sins when we baptize! So it is necessary to be baptized, even though it was not necessary for the thief on the cross.

Now that that's out of the way, let's get back to this thief. At first glance it would seem that there was one "good" thief and one "bad" thief that was crucified next to Jesus. But Luke's account does not really give us the full picture. In Matthew's account, he tells us that **"the rebels who were crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him."** (Matthew 27:44) He uses **"rebels,"** plural, to indicate that both criminals were insulting Jesus. There was not one "good" thief and one "bad" thief; they were both "bad." But somehow Jesus was able to have an impact on the repentant thief, and he changed. So what changed him?



*Harvey celebrates his 66th birthday!*

Clearly it was not Jesus' words to Him. We know exactly what Jesus said while on the cross. Before He forgave the thief's sin, Jesus didn't say anything to him. Furthermore, it could not have been Jesus' actions. In the brief time that the thief had any proximity to Jesus, Jesus was pinned to the cross. Jesus couldn't have done anything for him. So if it was not

Jesus' words, and it was not Jesus' actions, what was it? What did Jesus do that had such a profound impact on the thief that he would stop ridiculing Jesus and request to be remembered by Jesus when He walked through the very gates of Heaven?



*It's no wonder the TMU Campus ministry has tripled in a year-and-a-half, we have superheroes!*

I think it is reasonable to conclude that it had to have been Jesus' incredible attitude. Although the thief did not know the details of Jesus' life, nor was he there when Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin, or before Pontius Pilate, he was able to ascertain that "This man [Jesus] has done nothing wrong." How would he have known that? How could he conclude that while on the cross next to Jesus?

Jesus' innocence, in the mind of the thief at least, was not proven by a jury of His peers. It was not something that was determined by Herod or Pilate. It was something that exuded out of Him. Instead of being angry when the soldiers were gambling away His clothing, He asked God to forgive them because of their ignorance. When people were mocking Him, and trying to provoke Him, His concern was for His mother's needs. He never lashed out in anger, or treated anyone unkindly, even though He was being massively mistreated. It had to be these characteristics that caused the thief to begin to question his own per-

spectives of Jesus, and to respond to the mocking of other criminal by saying, **"Don't you fear God?"**

The only reason the thief would have asked that particular question is because at this point he unequivocally believed that Jesus was God in the flesh. This is then confirmed by his next statement, **"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."** He was sold! And because he was sold, he ended up saved! Not that he was no longer a criminal. He was absolutely still a criminal. But he was now a forgiven criminal!

Like Jesus, we currently live in a very hostile world where most people have very little room for views that are not their own. This is especially true of conservative Christian views and morals. Even something as basic as Christian views on God's creation of male and female genders are now called into question, and anyone who holds to those views is labeled as a phobic - as if the reason for their disagreement is because of fear. How then can a Christian win the world for Christ when it is so radically opposed to Him?

I believe the answer lies in the example Jesus set for us on the cross! He converted the most hardened heart, a criminal who was ridiculing Him, without even using words. It is our attitude, our love for people, our resolve to hold to our convictions, our refusal to give in to the same anger that people sometimes have towards us, and our life matching our doctrine. (1 Timothy 4:16) Yes, the world is dark. It always has been, and always will be. But that just gives us an opportunity to shine all the brighter... just like Jesus! And to Him be the glory!

Evan Bartholomew