

The Power of The Moment

This lesson teaches The Power of the Moment.

- We've read about the Thief on the Cross in the Bible.
- We don't know much about this man.
- But this man represents something powerful.

A thief understands "The Power of The Moment."

- We can't explain that whole situation.
- The man never met Jesus in his life.
- This is why I like this guy hanging on the cross next to Jesus.
- He sees the value of what Jesus is doing on the Cross.
- The Power of The Moment that he has just happened upon.
- What are you going to do with this moment?

Luke 23:39-43 - ³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"

⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. ^[a]"

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

- The Power of the moment
- The thief on the cross.

He's been mentioned by every preacher who ever preached the Gospels. Anyone who has ever studied the Bible **knows who the Thief on the Cross is**.

I'm **nobody's judge**, **don't know** this man, **don't know** all his crimes and I sure **don't know** all his sins.

But what I do know is, ***This man represents something powerful.***

He represents something that many people who believe they understand God will never understand.

His testimony is not that he is Righteous.

- He has no excuse. He has no justification for his crimes or his sins.
- He is a thief.

A thief understands something that many people don't understand.

A thief understands the Power Of The Moment.

- A thief waits for that moment. That moment of opportunity.
- That **moment** when no one else is paying attention.
- That **moment** when other people are sleeping.
- That's the **moment** the thief has been waiting for.
- The **moment** to take what he didn't work for.
- The **moment** to steal what doesn't belong to Him.

The thief on the Cross frustrates preachers. We can't place him.

- We can't place Him in the Old Testament Judaism
- And we can't place him in the New Testament Church.

People are always saying, "Well what about the thief on the cross?"

- "He didn't get baptized." "He never went to church."
- "And look, he got to go to Heaven with Jesus."

And as preachers, we have no response.

- We can't explain that whole situation.
- The man never met Jesus in his life.
- Except for this incredibly brief moment where he is about to be crucified for his crimes.

And in this moment...Hanging there... **Wounded...Beaten...Suffering...**

See the thief might have gotten caught.

- He might be paying for his misdeeds...
- His situation might not look too good...

But don't underestimate the Thief...

- Because the Thief knows something...
- The Thief knows The Power Of The Moment.
- *He knows that there is a very small moment* in time that if you are going to seize something, you're going to have to do it in **The Moment that the owner isn't looking.**

Had it not been for this moment, it is common understanding that this guy would not have gone to Heaven.

- Because he was a thief.
- He was a sinner.
- He doesn't belong.
- But there he is. **Being crucified on the cross Next to Jesus.**

Talk about luck.

- Talk about opportunity.
- He's about to score the biggest heist of all time.
- He's about to Cease the moment that nobody ever would have thought was possible for him, a thief....

All his life was one big mess up.

- This **wasn't the first time** he got caught...
- No, his rap sheet goes way back...
- **Long before he** ever stole anything from anybody, he was lusting.
- He was racking up sins **way before he got caught** stealing.

James 1:14-15 - 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Too often we judge a person after we catch them.

- But understand, long before they got caught by you...
- Long before you saw them do what they did...
- God had already saw the lust in their heart.

Sometimes we think we're so smart because we caught them.

- We get **all spiritual** because we've got scripture for what they did wrong.
- But understand... Long before you caught them.
- God already knew what was going on.

Do you know why Jesus wasn't caught off guard when they threw that prostitute at his feet?

He already knew what was going on in her life.

- Can I just say this...?
- **God doesn't need anybody's help** keeping track of someone else's sins.

Can I just say this, "none of us are without sin."

- We have all sinned, we are all guilty.

Everybody has sin in their life.

- That's why we need Jesus. That's why we need salvation.

God already knew you would need His help...

- That's what the cross was all about...
- Somebody had to pay the price for our sin. **For your sin.**

So, *there's Jesus* – Paying the bill.

- That's not just any blood being shed on the Cross...
- That's the precious blood of the spotless lamb of God.
- **Salvation** wasn't cheap.
- It was expensive.

Salvation is the most valuable thing known to man.

- **To have the opportunity to go to Heaven** –
- Even after we lived the way we lived our lives is an amazing opportunity.
- After all we did. All we got away with.
- And we didn't get away with.
- **God knows all** that stuff and yet **He still offers us** salvation...

- ***If you have Salvation***, you have the most precious thing a person could ever hope to have.

Here's something I can appreciate about a thief.

- ***If a thief steals*** something from you...
- It's because ***they understand the value*** of the thing more than you do.
- ***A thief can't steal*** anything from you if he doesn't understand the value of it more than you do.
- ***If you value*** the thing more than the thief, ***you'll keep it safe***.
- If you value, it more than the thief you'll value it enough to keep it where no thief can take it from you.

This guy hanging on the cross next to Jesus, ***He sees the value of what Jesus is doing on the Cross*** -

- The Power of The Moment that he has just happened upon.

The thief is about to be executed...

- "I've been waiting for this moment all of my life."
- I've made a lot of bad decisions.
- I've gone the wrong way all my life.

If it were not for the power of the moment, he would have been lost forever.

- "Jesus remember me..."
- While the guards are laughing.
- Everybody else is having a good old-time making fun of Jesus.

He recognizes the most defining moment of his life - Doing the right thing at the right time will determine your destiny.

- Defining moments when we decide between our **past** and our **future**.
- Our **what is** and **what could be**.

Joshua 24:15a - ¹⁵ But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.

- **This is** the day of salvation.

- **This moment** could change your life.
- **It could change** your kids' lives.
- **It could change** your grandchildren's lives.

Luke 23:42-43 - 42 Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”⁴³ Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Side note – **Jesus had to die before the thief.**

- They broke his legs and pierced His side.
- He had to die first.
- **Why?**
- Because he had to purchase the thief's salvation.

That thief may have been a sinner.

- **His life** may have been one big mess up after another.
- Everybody else may have written him off.
- But *that guy knew* **the Power of The Moment**.
- He knew he better not wait till the opportunity was gone.
- He knew ***he had to make things right with Jesus*** while he had the chance.

The reason why the thief on the cross received a place in Heaven that day is because he understood the value of it. The power of the moment.

What are you going to do with this moment in your life?

- **Are you going to waste it?**
- This opportunity for you to hear a message that can bring you salvation.
- **A moment where** you're asked to consider Jesus.
- To open your heart and let Him begin to work in your life.
- I'm trying to share with you the greatest thing a person could ever receive.
- The opportunity to **give your** heart and life to Jesus Christ.

CLOSE: Samson and Delilah - Judges 16:4, 6, 17, 19-21 Sometime later, ***he fell in love with a woman*** in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah.

⁶ So Delilah said to Samson, ***“Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.”***

¹⁷ **So he told her everything.** “No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother’s womb.

If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.”

¹⁹ ***After putting him to sleep on her lap, she called for someone to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him.***

²⁰ Then she called, “Samson, **the Philistines are upon you!**”

He awoke from his sleep and thought, ***“I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” (AGAIN)*** But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

²¹ Then the Philistines seized him, ***gouged out his eyes*** and took him down to Gaza. **Binding him** with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison.

What is the significance of Samson's eyes being taken from him?

By taking out his eyes, they eliminated the lifelong hindrance that Samson had. Now, in his blindness, he was able to see God like never before.

His sight had proven to be his downfall and now his blindness would lead to his greatest moment of victory.

In The Moment – He had been Blinded, binded, and grinded....

The Death of Samson – Judges 16:23-26 - ²³ Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, ***“Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.”***

²⁴ When the people saw him, ***they praised their god***, saying, “Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain.”

²⁵ While they were in high spirits, they shouted, ***“Bring out Samson to entertain us.”*** So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, ²⁶ Samson said to the servant who held his hand, ***“Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.”***

What does the story of Samson symbolize?

The good news of Samson's story is the same message many of us sing to our children: **we are weak, but God is strong.**

If we put our hope in ourselves or others, we become like Samson: weak and enslaved.

Samson is a reminder that our true strength and hope is found in the Lord.

Judges 16:28-30 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” ²⁹ Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, ³⁰ Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

What can we learn from the story of Samson and Delilah?

The most important lesson we can learn from Samson and Delilah is that God prefers to forgive than to judge.