Amazing Grace BY Malusi Skunyana

Read Luke 23:39-43

LUKE 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

LUKE 23:40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

LUKE 23:41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

LUKE 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

LUKE 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

The story of the dying thief that asked Jesus to remember him when He comes in His kingdom testifies of God’s amazing grace. It tells us that we can never measure the extent of God’s mercy, no one knows where His mercy begins or ends; all we know is simply that God is merciful and gracious even to the worst sinner. We can never be too sinful to be accepted by God and to receive His forgiveness, when a sinner decides to turn away from sin and seeks the forgiveness of God, he is guaranteed acceptance with God.

The gospel writers record that Jesus was crucified with two thieves and Jesus’ cross was placed in the middle to indicate that He was the worst criminal. Had an opportunity been given for the Jewish leaders and the mob to choose who of the three crucified should be released, no doubt, they would rather have both thieves released than have Jesus released; they wanted Him dead. This is exactly what happened when Pilate offered to release either Jesus or Barabbas depending on the people’s choice. They chose to have Barabbas the criminal released and cried that Jesus be crucified. In today’s passage, Luke tells us that one of the thieves was mocking Jesus, joining the priests and the soldiers who were also mocking Him. But the other thief rebuked his fellow, stating that while they were guilty of all the crimes for which they were crucified, Jesus on the other hand was innocent.

The Bible text does not tell us how this thief could have known of Jesus’ innocence of all the charges laid against Him. Also surprising is his request to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” On what grounds was he calling “Lord” One who had been declared the worst criminal by both priests and people? What had he seen in Jesus that others did not? How did he know that the One who was dying next to him would have a kingdom? Unfortunately, the Bible text does not answer any of these questions, but in its silence, it tells us a lot. The thief regarded Jesus as Lord, he was convinced of Jesus’ innocence, and he was sure Jesus would have a kingdom, and he prayed Jesus to remember him when He comes into His kingdom. The thief must have had some spiritual revelation; the Spirit of God must have revealed to him something of the nature of Jesus. Looking at the One who was mocked, despised, and abused, the thief saw the Saviour and he pleaded for mercy.

Jesus did not delay to answer the prayer of the thief, but He gave him an assurance that very moment, that he would be with Him in Paradise. Hanging on the cross and looking helpless and powerless, Jesus still had the authority to forgive sin. He changed the destiny of the vile sinner in just a moment. The thief would die with a blessed assurance that when Jesus would finally gather His children into His kingdom, he would also be there among the saved. This is indeed amazing grace! While the people surrounding the cross thought that Jesus was defeated and powerless, He was in fact engaged in His work of saving the lost.

Dear friend, you can never be too sinful to be saved if your heart is open to the working of the Holy Spirit; you can never have gone too far to be within the reach of God if your heart still longs for Him; Jesus the Saviour can forgive all your sins when you surrender your life to Him. You may have forgiveness, you may have peace of mind, you may have acceptance with God; you may have it all today. I pray that like the thief on the cross you may have a blessed assurance today, that when Jesus comes again you may be part of the great multitude of the saved. May God bless you! Amen!