

Redemption

Preached at East Winthrop Baptist Church, E. Winthrop, Maine

September 14, 2025

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Luke 23:39-43 and others

I. **An Awakening**

- a. I grew up in Virginia, and after coming to Christ while away at college, I returned to Virginia for a few years before God called me to Maine
- b. Sometime after moving to Maine I passed a small, sort of dirty, unimpressive little establishment with a sign that stated, “Redemption Center”
- c. I thought to myself, “What a great thing they are doing, being available to tell people about Jesus that they might be redeemed
- d. It was sometime after that when I understood that in Maine they would pay five cents for every discarded drink can, and so you could redeem cans for money at the Redemption Center
- e. It sounds funny that I misunderstood such a sign, but on the other hand it gives us a marvelous illustration
- f. You see, those cans that had been designed for usefulness were emptied and had been discarded as useless, without value. But when brought to the right person, they were redeemed, bought for a price, to be made into something new, something of worth
- g. That is what redemption is, it is buying for a price that which was considered of little value. It is taking something of little or no worth and giving it worth.

II. **Background**

- a. God created this universe with so much marvelous design, and He looked at it all and saw that it was very good
 - i. There was great value in all that He had created in that it displayed wonderfully His creativity, beauty, wisdom, and power in goodness and purity
- b. But soon afterwards came The Fall, when sin entered the world
 - i. That sin by Adam and Eve introduced corruption, disorder, brokenness, disease, and death
 - ii. And although we can still see evidence of the original creation – aspects of its design and beauty, etc. – it is all corrupted; it is breaking down

- iii. Many years ago, when I went to Italy and Greece, I saw a number of ruins of the great palaces and temples
 - 1. From the ruins I could imagine how magnificent those buildings were when they were first made, but now they were in ruins
- iv. Closer to home, when I drive through the Maine countryside I see some big old barns
 - 1. I like to imagine how magnificent such a barn was when first built, and how happy the owner was to have that new barn
 - 2. But through the years physical corruption, decay, and disorder have all but overtaken that once magnificent structure
 - 3. Is that the end of all things?
 - 4. Has that which was once of great value now become worthless?
 - 5. Could not the right person purchase that barn, redeem that barn, and work to restore it to its former glory, or perhaps make it even more glorious?
- c. Adam and Eve as well as their descendants, though designed for great usefulness, fell into corruption, decay, and brokenness just like those old Maine barns

III. **An Early Start**

- a. But God, in His wonderful plan for His creation, began the long work of redemption
- b. He began immediately, even while pronouncing His judgment due to The Fall
- c. When speaking to the serpent, God said in Genesis 3:15, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”
 - i. It is here that God gives a hint that a descendant of Eve will tread down the devil and those who are his, and yet that descendant will pay a price of injury

IV. **A Severe Contrast**

- a. Now lest we think redemption is minor, or easy, or cheap, we need to understand how devastating was The Fall, and how desperately needful is mankind of a redeemer
 - i. For about 1,600 years after creation, men multiplied on the earth
 - ii. Now if people are basically good in and of themselves, as many today believe, then we would expect that although there may have been some bad apples, civilization would have grown in wonderful ways
 - 1. Some in recent history also state that man is basically good, but that it is organized religion that causes conflicts
 - 2. This post-Creation time period did not have organized religion as we know it, so it is a good time period to use for testing that hypothesis
 - iii. However, if The Fall brought corruption to all aspects of the person, then we would expect to see conditions deteriorate as people multiplied, and any restraint would be that brought by the grace of God
 - iv. So what happened?
- b. In Genesis 6:5 we read, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
- c. And in Genesis 6:13 we read, “Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold I am about to destroy them with the earth.’”
- d. The Fall was so devastating and so pervasive that by Noah’s day the whole of mankind living at that time was pursuing evil continually, except for Noah and his family who sought the Lord
- e. But even after the flood we see almost immediately sin startup again in Noah’s family and subsequent generations
 - i. That fact tells us that any good in Noah and his family was not inherent and thus able to propagate through birth, but came by the grace of God

- f. So mankind is not basically good, but is in desperate need of redemption as stated in Romans 3:9-12, "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.'"
 - g. There it is. We are a bunch of scattered, emptied cans that have become useless, in need of redemption
 - h. You see, if we do not understand the hopelessness of our condition apart from God, then we will not look for a Redeemer or Savior, but instead we will look for a life coach, or a meditation technique, or self-help books, or seven steps to a better life, or any number of solutions apart from God
- V. **Lessons from the Old Testament**
- a. But the entire rest of the Old Testament chronicles the need, and the watching, and the waiting for a redeemer
 - b. So continuing in that long work of redemption, God gives us many lessons and many examples in the centuries following Noah
 - c. In Genesis 37 we read of Joseph who was seen as worthless by his brothers
 - i. Genesis 37:20 begins, "Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits..."
 - ii. And then in verse 24 we read, "and they took him and threw him into the pit."
 - iii. And some of us have felt at times like we have been set aside, tossed into a pit, worthless
 - iv. But Psalm 103:2-4 reads, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit; who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion..."
 - v. It is the Lord who visits you in the pit and rescues you out of it
 - vi. Joseph then was redeemed, in a sense, out of the pit when he was bought by some Ishmaelite traders
 - vii. But he then was sold into slavery, and later ended up in jail

- viii. It did not feel like redemption, but it was all part of God's plan to bring him to Egypt where he needed to go to get in position to rescue the whole land
 - ix. God did finally bring him out of the pit of jail and put him as second in command of all Egypt
 - x. Joseph's life is a picture of what it means for God to bring a person from being counted as worthless, from being forgotten, to having immense worth
- d. Another picture of redemption is given to us in the book of Ruth
- i. Ruth became a Gentile widow of a Jewish man whose Jewish mother Naomi became a widow herself
 - ii. By natural thinking Ruth had no hope of family except possibly by going back to her own people, away from the true God
 - iii. However, Ruth had learned of the God of Naomi, the living and true God, and she told Naomi, "Your God will be my God..."
 - iv. Frankly, that is the moment when Ruth was truly redeemed, because whatever else happened to her, she belonged to God Almighty
 - v. Nevertheless, after returning with Naomi to Bethlehem, Ruth ends up meeting Boaz, a prominent man in the community
 - vi. There was a practice at that time of redemption of the land of a widow whereby a near relative would buy the land from her to keep it in the family
 - vii. Boaz bought the land, he redeemed the land, and because of the circumstances, he was also bringing Ruth and Naomi under his care so that the land and the people could remain with the extended family
 - viii. Boaz is called a kinsman redeemer and points forward to the Christ who is to come, as one of us, as our kinsman redeemer
 - ix. Boaz and Ruth marry at which point Ruth then possesses all that belongs to Boaz
 - x. They then have a son who is the grandfather of King David, who is the ancestor of Jesus Christ
 - xi. Ruth went from being outside the covenant people, and otherwise unknown, to being brought under the covenant, counted among God's people, and then being in the line of the great Redeemer

- e. In addition to these physical, tangible examples of redemption from lowliness to esteem, God ultimately points to the need to redeem the soul
 - i. In Psalm 49:5-9 the sons of Korah write, “Why should I fear in days of adversity, when the iniquity of my foes surrounds me, even those who trust in their wealth, and boast in the abundance of their riches? No man can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever – that he should live on eternally; that he should not undergo decay.”
 1. So monetary wealth cannot buy the redemption of a soul
 2. There are those who are very rich who are seeking ways to live forever, trying to defy death through costly methods and very detailed routines
 3. They are fighting against the effects of The Fall, and have self-ascribed worth which they seek to perpetuate, but according to God, that is an entirely futile endeavor
 4. I have had to deal at times with various investments and retirement planning and related topics
 - a. Now and again I will see a summary telling me my net worth is so many dollars
 - b. What if that money is squandered, or stolen, or the value disappears? Or what happens when I die and can no longer access that money?
 - c. Does that truly mean my net worth becomes zero? Am I worthless at that point?
 - d. If in my mind I truly think that number represents my worth, then woe is me
 - e. Far to the contrary, when God redeems us, we become His child forever, even beyond death, and are counted as having inestimable value
 5. Remember that the redemption of a person’s soul is costly, so costly it cannot be bought by any amount of money

- f. So the Old Testament speaks of the Messiah, the Christ, the promised one, who is to come as we read in Isaiah 59:20, “And a Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,’ declares the Lord.”
 - g. It is that one who will somehow redeem a people for His own
- VI. **The Cost of Redemption**
- a. Then, in the opening chapters of the New Testament, we read of a number of miraculous occurrences including a declaration to a lowly couple in Nazareth that the woman would bear a child who would save His people from their sins
 - b. But many of the Jews were stuck in an old, material understanding of what the Messiah would do, namely that He would drive out the Romans and setup the independent kingdom of Israel again
 - i. They were looking for a redemption that falls far short of the magnificent plan of God
 - ii. They were wanting to be redeemed from slavery to Rome, but God wants to redeem them from slavery to sin, which redemption is far more costly
 - c. So what does it take to redeem a person’s soul? What is that cost?
 - d. We are told in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death...,” and in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”
 - e. And we read in Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”
 - f. We all have sinned. We all deserve death and God’s wrath.
 - g. However, Romans 5:1 reads, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - h. And then for those who have faith in Jesus Christ, Romans 5:8-10 gives us a fuller understanding stating, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”
 - i. That is the cost of our redemption

- i. Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, His beloved, came in the flesh, lived among us, took the punishment, and gave His life that all who have faith might live with Him and the Father for the rest of eternity
- j. 1 John 4:9-10 reiterates this message stating, "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."
 - i. When we were desperate, when we were hopeless, when we were empty, He redeemed us and made us His own

VII. **New Testament Outworking**

- a. What does that look like in the New Testament?
- b. Now is when we look at Luke 23:39-43
 - i. Jesus is hanging on the cross with a thief on either side of Him
 - ii. One is "hurling abuse at Him, saying 'Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!'"
 - 1. That man was mocking Jesus
 - 2. But even if he thought Jesus might possibly be the Messiah, his only interest was himself
 - 3. He was used up and dying, not interested in redemption
 - iii. "But the other answered, and rebuking him said, 'Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he was saying, 'Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!'"
 - 1. Here is a man who had made utter ruin of his life with his criminality
 - 2. He had not a thing to show for himself
 - 3. He was not famous, or rich, or valued by any
 - 4. He had been blind to the destructiveness of his ways
 - 5. But now his eyes were opened according to Jesus' statement in John 9:39, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind."

6. What he saw while hanging on his own cross was that he deserved what he was getting
7. But he also saw that Jesus was the sinless one, the one with riches of grace great enough to redeem his soul
8. He had nothing of his own to offer, but confessed his guilt and emptiness before the King of kings and Lord of lords, asking for Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom
9. Jesus, out of His great grace, answered him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
10. That man, whose name we do not even know, was at that moment redeemed
11. He went from being used up, empty, and worthless for any good thing, to being of immeasurable value and holding a promise of being with Jesus and the Father for all eternity
12. That is true redemption

c. Now consider Mary Magdalene

- i. We are told that she was one from whom seven demons had gone out
- ii. Even one demon would be a torment, but she had had seven
- iii. Her life would have been absolutely miserable for her and for anyone around her
- iv. But when she met Jesus, he cast out the seven demons
- v. She was redeemed, brought from worthless to great worth
- vi. She then followed Jesus for the rest of His ministry
- vii. Then, when Jesus had been crucified and laid in the tomb, Mary came on the first day of the week to see the tomb and anoint His body
- viii. She found the tomb open and the body gone, and so assumed that His body had been taken away somewhere
- ix. We read in John 20:11, "But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb."
- x. She sees two angels who ask why she is weeping and she says to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

- xi. You see, Jesus was the one who had brought her out of worthlessness and given her great worth. He was the one who loved her when no one else did. Her life was wrapped up in His, and when He died, she did not know what to do. What little comfort she might have had even from seeing His body was taken from her with the body being stolen, or so she supposed
- xii. She understood her redemption so well that to be apart from Jesus was to be apart from all that gave her worth
- xiii. But then turning around, she saw Jesus, though not recognizing Him
- xiv. After an exchange, He calls her by name and you can only imagine the sheer joy she must have had when she realized the One who had redeemed her was alive

VIII. Application

- a. Now how about you, have you been redeemed by the living Lord?
 - i. Have you believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?
 - ii. Have you put your trust in Him to redeem your life, to redeem your soul?
 - iii. Do you understand as the thief on the cross did that your life was empty before you met Jesus and there is nothing worthwhile ahead without Him?
 - iv. Do you understand as Mary did that your life is so wrapped up in Jesus that apart from Him you having nothing of ultimate worth?
 - v. Do you understand with both the thief and Mary that with Jesus your life is of immeasurable worth?
 - vi. Do you realize that with Jesus your life has ultimate meaning and purpose
 - vii. Do you realize that with Jesus not only does your life looking forward have purpose, but what came before can now be seen as that which brought you to the point of meeting your Savior and gives rise to testimony about His grace and mercy?
 - viii. Do realize that with Jesus you are going to be with Him and the Father in Paradise for all eternity?
- b. Now let me ask, do you know anyone who is realizing the emptiness of life without knowing Jesus?

- i. You know the way to life
- ii. You who know Jesus can introduce him or her to the only One who can redeem his or her life
- iii. He can redeem from the uttermost depths
- iv. He can redeem whether in the beginning, middle, or end of their lives
- v. He promises in John 6:37, "...the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."
- vi. When you see around you corruption, disorder, brokenness, disease, and death – evidence of The Fall – remember that there is a Redeemer, that those who believe, regardless of what happens, have been redeemed and one day will be with God in Paradise