

**BIBLE STORY: JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS ENEMIES**

Luke 23:33-43

**Central Thoughts**

- A person's good name and reputation is a gift from God.
- God desires to protect a person's good name and reputation.
- Jesus kept the Eighth Commandment by forgiving His enemies who not only crucified Him but who also slandered Him with their slander and false testimony against Him.
- God's forgiveness enables us to defend our neighbor's good name and reputation, even if he does not deserve it.

**Discussion Questions**

What is the Eighth Commandment?

*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*

What does this mean?

*We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.*

In the language of the Small Catechism, what does Jesus do when He prays for those who had crucified Him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

*He is "defending them, speaking well of them, and explaining everything in the kindest way."*

According to Jesus' prayer, what is at the heart of defending your neighbor's good name and reputation, speaking well of him, and explaining everything that he does in the best possible way?

*Forgiveness and mercy that we do not deserve. In other words, it is the Gospel that enables us to guard and protect our neighbor's good name and reputation, even when we know that the truth might be otherwise.*

Should we only defend our neighbor's good name and reputation when he deserves it?

*No, unless we are given the responsibility to judge a person, we are to cover their failings, shortcomings, and sin with forgiveness.*

What does human reason think about Jesus' praying for forgiveness for those who had sinned against Him?

*Human reason thinks it is wrong to cover over someone's sin with mercy.*

Why does human reason think it is wrong to defend someone or put the best construction on the things they have done wrong?

*Sinful human reason always believes that a person should be treated well only when they have done something to deserve it.*

How does Jesus' respond to those who taunted Him?

*He ignores their hurtful words and prays for them.*

Who does Jesus love more, Himself or His enemies?

*His enemies*

What does Jesus demonstrate to His enemies by not defending Himself?

*His love for them*

What does the repentant sinner confess?

*That he deserves to be punished for his sin.*

What does the repentant sinner do when Jesus is blasphemed against by the other criminal?

*He defends Jesus good name and reputation, "This man has done nothing wrong."*

How does the criminal confess his faith in Jesus?

*"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."*

How does Jesus respond to the repentant criminal?

*He forgives him and promises him eternal life. "Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."*

What do the Scriptures teach is the fulfillment of God's Law?

*Love. "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).*

How does Jesus fulfill the Law by His deeds and words?

*He dies upon the cross for the sins of those who do not deserve it and He defends us with His words of forgiveness that we have no right to claim except by the grace of God in Christ.*

### **Meditation on the Bible Story**

If we are to keep the Eighth Commandment, we are actually called upon to cover our neighbor's sins, shortcomings, and failings with forgiveness. Just because we know the truth about what someone has done or said, does not give us the right to judge him by gossiping about him or slandering his good name and reputation with others. "Defending our neighbor, speaking well of him, and explaining everything about him in the kindest way" may feel like lying at times, especially when we know that he has sinned or done something wrong. Covering our neighbor's failings under the Eighth Commandment is rooted in the undeserved forgiveness and mercy that we receive in Christ. Jesus not only prayed for His enemies a prayer that they did not deserve, "Father forgive them," but in forgiving us our sins He restores a good name and reputation to us that we have no right to, except by the merits of His suffering and death. Jesus fulfills the Law by loving those who do not deserve it. He dies for our sins and in speaking His word of forgiveness to us, makes it possible for us to begin to cover the sins of others and defend their good name. False testimony is not only the telling of lies, gossip, and slander, but it is also the refusal to allow Jesus' forgiving word to reign in our conversation about others. The repentant criminal was not only saved from his sins by Jesus' forgiveness, but the love of Christ that he received enabled him to defend Jesus from the false and blasphemous accusations of others.

### **Prayer on the Bible Story**

Lord Jesus, as you prayed for Your enemies and persecutors who did not deserve it, so teach us by your forgiveness to defend our neighbor, speak well of him, and explain everything about him in the kindest way. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.



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