

Two Equal Sinners -- But Different as Day and Night

Reading: Luke 12:4-5. One of the criminals...kept deriding him...but the other rebuked him, saying: "Do you not fear God?"

Luke 23:39-40. Two equally guilty criminals, but different as day and night. What's the difference? The believing criminal says it's "fearing God." One does, one doesn't. But what does that mean?

The un-fearing thief thinks his big problem is with the authorities who caught him and the justice system now executing him. All he really needs is to get off that cross. Perhaps he doubts that there is a God at all, or that God knows he's innocent. Either way: with God there's nothing to fear. No problem. "Not so," cries the believing thief.

The "big" courtroom where nobody ever stands 100% innocent is God's courtroom. To "fear God" is to fess up to the truth of our own lives. We do not fear, love and trust in God above all things. Yet fearing God is not the last word. The believing thief follows his fear word with a plea for mercy to the innocent one on the middle cross. To this guilty God-fearer, now a Christ-truster, Jesus offers acceptance. Remarkable!

When we are linked to the Man in the Middle, our case in God's court is already decided. Not that we're declared innocent. No, we're guilty as charged, and nevertheless forgiven. How so? Jesus enters our case, stands in for us before The Judge. He takes our sentence too, our place on the cross. In Christ our court date with God -- that's judgment day -- is already behind us. Call it Paradise. Today already! Incredible? No. It's worth believing. He said so.

Prayer: Renew our hearts, God, to redeem our fears. Nothing in the world is worth fearing, you say, but You alone. Then in your Son you surprise us with his cheering words "Fear not." Let faith in this surprise replace our fear of anything--even you. Amen.

Taken from : Lent's 40 days through the Prism of Siegfried Reinhardt's Art by Edward H. Schroeder