



Matthew 25:36

*I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me;
I was in prison and you came to Me.*

What Does This Have To Do With Joe

I want to tell you about a man I first meet about three months ago. His name is Joe. He is not in for his first time but he has not become hard core either. Growing up in a Hispanic neighborhood there has been many influences that could have put him into that hard core category long before now, but he didn't let that happen.

Joe is in his early twenties, has two kids but is not married. The pride he displays when he shows me their pictures, I know he loves them very much. He doesn't talk much about the children's mother but she comes faithfully to bring his babies to see him.

That in itself takes a lot of dedication, the women wait outside for hours in line, sometime only to be turned away because too many people were there for visiting that day. The longer someone is inside, the better chance there is that the family will get discouraged and give up on them. Its tough for any single woman to try to raise a family alone under any circumstances. Then add into that all the worry and discouragement they feel that their husbands or boyfriends are going to just get out and go back to do the same old thing. Its not hard to understand why they get discouraged and want to give up.

When a man has that happen it is a very traumatic period in his time of incarceration. Many become violent, strike out at others, become bitter or at the very least become very pessimistic about their future. There is good reason to be a pessimist at that point, because it is much more difficult to get out on your own with nothing to come out to. It makes starting a new life just that much more out of their reach.

The majority of men and women getting out of prison today have little or no family support group to come out to. It makes the need for half way houses and other programs that much more important if these people are going to have any kind of chance of making a new life for themselves. It is one of the reasons the recidivism rates are so high. I just heard a statistic the other day that really amazed me. There are approximately 600,000 people getting out of jails and prisons every month!

How are we as a society going to want them coming out? To go back to the same old thing, to continue the escalating cycle of returning to jail with more serious crimes each time. Each of those new crimes leave new victims in the wake!

The critic says we are too soft on the criminals. We have all heard the reports, of the TV, swimming pool and tennis courts. That may be where the politicians and the rich go do their time but I haven't seen a place like that yet .

Prisons have become big business, they have even become privatized and I've heard they are on the stock market. In the past twenty years they have more than doubled the amount of prisons in this state alone. Now add to that the other forty-nine states and all the prisons they have built. Our country has the distinction of having more people in prison than any other country on earth. We are doing something wrong.

Like so many of our other roots that we can trace back to a Biblical beginning for this country. Most people don't know that the first prison in this country was founded by Quakers. Their premise was to lead the criminal to repentance and a relationship with God was the only way to change a criminal's life.

I'll bet by now you must be asking yourself what does this have to do with Joe ? I was getting to that.

I think Joe has got a good chance to make this the last time for him. From the progress I have witnessed in him I am optimistic that he really is going to turn it around.

I wasn't so sure of that when I first met him. You see Joe is my inmate clerk for the chapel. He is a trustee who is serving his time working in the Chaplain's office.

I don't get to pick who the deputies give us as trustees. And when Joe got this job he came in with an attitude of a septic when it came to religion. He was willing to listen and that is what

he did. He wasn't required to stay for the Bible studies but more often than not he would be there. More and more I would find him using his free time to read the Bible or some other Christian material. I was able to give him a study Bible and now he is getting into studying the Word.

If you were to meet him you would think he was born again a lot longer than he has been.

More than once the Lord has used Joe to bring a smile to my face with something he says or does. It's always God's perfect timing , when there is pressure from whatever it is going on, I'll see the growth in Joe and know it's things like that which make all of it worthwhile.

I got a kick out of Joe a few weeks ago when he told me the story of these two guys who came to Chapel and started causing trouble. Joe told me it made him mad and not only did he get them to leave, he followed them out and told them off for "disrespecting God's house". Yes he is still rough around the edges but you gotta love his spirit!

Just the other day Joe brought me in someone he said I needed to talk to. Turns out he had been sharing the Lord to this guy and Joe brought him to me to reap his harvest in bringing him to the Lord.

I'll miss Joe when he goes. He has been a good trustee. But now I think he is going to make an even better husband and father because he now has the Heavenly Father in his life.

The Quakers had it right, lead a man to repentance and a relationship with the Lord and it will change their life and also the world they will be going back to.

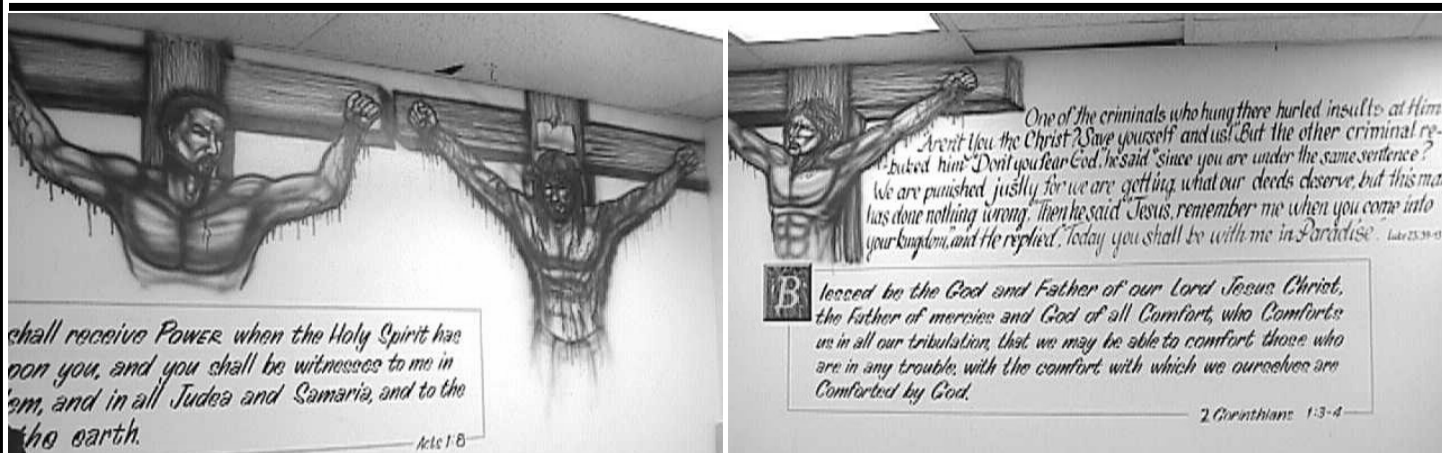
Joe gets out in about four months. If you think of it pray for him and his family. Joe is going to make a difference when he goes home.



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A inmate drawing , Thinking of home?



These paintings are what you see on the wall behind my desk at the jail. Unfortunately it is just in black and white due to the printing. They are actually in black and red just like your Bible. Some are offended by so much blood on Jesus. But then the shed blood of Christ is an offence to the world. **1 Corinthians 1:18**

Jesus Defended by A Convict

Throughout Men's Central Jail there are many murals painted on the walls. Some honor fallen deputies killed in the line of duty. Then there is more than one of "the Duke" John Wayne. Scenes right out of the jungles of the Viet Nam War. And one that must be thirty yards long depicting a panoramic view right out of the wild west.

I don't know when the tradition of doing these murals started. I do know there have been many talented inmates over the years who have left a part of themselves behind.

A few months ago I started trying to come up with something to put behind my desk. I wanted it to make a statement all on its own. Like when we first came up with the logo for our prison ministry. It seemed like every logo I saw had hand cuffs or bars. Its not that there is anything wrong with that, I just wanted it to say something of the cross. Our logo is supposed to say, "Jesus is the key that unlocks the prison door".

Many men who come in for counseling are at the end of their rope, down and out, feeling dejected and rejected. I thought of the cross and how it could be applied. In Isaiah 53 it says, "He was despised and rejected". All had abandoned Him in His greatest hour. So many of the men I see are abandoned by family and friends. They know the meaning of the saying out of sight out of mind. Wives, girlfriends, family and friends give up on them. Most of the time they probably had it coming.

Jesus was abandoned and rejected when He didn't have it coming. He went to the cross to pay a debt He didn't owe, with a price we couldn't pay. **For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.....2 Cor 5:21**

A plan was starting to take shape. I know that for the Christian, Jesus is no longer on the cross. But I wanted the message to be one of the cross so Luke 23:39-43 became the starting point for the mural.

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save

Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

From that came the idea to do the mural in just black and red, just like the words in our Bibles. I think it got the desired effect, most have a comment when they go to sit down

A few weeks ago I thought I would try to put a Bible study together and here is part of that outline that I hope helps explain what we hope the statement of the mural conveys.

A. THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS STORY.

(Luke 23:39-43)

1. While Jesus hung on the cross, He never once uttered a defense. He didn't yell out, "You've got the wrong man. I didn't commit an offense worthy of death. You are crucifying an innocent man."

2. In fact, not only did Jesus utter no defense... none of His disciples protested His persecution. Not one disciple spoke out on Jesus' behalf. They all remained silent as they watched their friend and teacher suffer intense pain.

3. Interestingly enough...the only person who spoke out in defense of Jesus was a convicted criminal...a thief...a robber...an unrighteous, sinful man.

4. We are told in the Bible that while this thief was hanging on a cross next to Jesus, he told the other thief, "this man (talking about Jesus) has done nothing wrong."

5. This thief had the courage and the faith to stand up for Jesus. By putting his faith in Jesus,

he was rewarded with hearing that day he would be with Him in paradise.

B. HERE ARE SOME LESSONS THAT WE CAN LEARN FROM JESUS' SAYING FROM THE CROSS. "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

(1) FIRST, FROM THIS STORY WE LEARN THE TRUE MEANING OF SALVATION BY GRACE.

1. This condemned unworthy thief received salvation. He didn't deserve it. In fact, in Matthew's account of this event, this thief had earlier insulted Jesus too. (Matthew 27:44).

2. As this man hung on the cross, his heart softened and he obtained a repentant heart. He wanted Jesus to forgive him...to remember him in the kingdom, which Jesus did.

3. I ask you...how could this criminal be saved? He was a convicted robber who was sentenced to death. He had probably been a thief for many years...taking things that did not belong to him. He had lived a sinful life. So how could he receive salvation? He received salvation through the unearned gift of God's grace. And it is through this grace that we can be saved as well.

"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:22-24).

4. Through Jesus Christ, we can be freely justified by the grace of God.

5. Our salvation has been made available through the love of one man...Jesus Christ. He laid down His life so that we may live.

Jesus Defended by A Convict

(continued)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:8

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

a few more years he would have eventually made the decision to follow Christ. But his time ran out.

6. The undeserved grace that the thief received on the cross is the same grace that is available to us today.

5. God is not interested in what we once were; instead, He is interested in what we can become.

2. Everyone's time is running out. Since life is so unpredictable, we may only have a short time left. We need to place our faith in Jesus and receive God's wonderful gift of salvation before it is too late.

7. If you have not received this awesome grace of God, you can today. To receive salvation, you must believe in Jesus Christ...admit that you are a sinner and repent of those sins... accept what He did on the cross as payment for your sin... confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead.

6. Many people in the Bible overcame a sinful past, and became great and faithful servants of the Lord.

CONCLUSION:

a. Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, at one time worshipped other gods (Joshua 24:2).

1. In closing, we have learned several important lessons from Jesus' saying from the cross.

(2) SECOND, WE LEARN THAT NO MATTER WHAT WE HAVE DONE IN OUR PAST WE CAN STILL BE SAVED.

b. David, King of Israel, although he committed adultery, became a man after God's own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14)

a. We have learned the true meaning of salvation by Grace.

1. I don't know for sure, but it is a safe bet the thief had not lived his life for God. He probably didn't attend the synagogue ...he probably lived his life without any regard for the things of God at all.

c. Paul, the great apostle of Jesus Christ, at one time had Christians arrested and killed.

b. We have learned that no matter what we have done in our past we can still receive salvation.

2. But while on the cross, he changed. He became spiritually minded. The afterlife became important to him. As he was approaching death, he got his heart right with God.

7. Although at one time these men lived ungodly lives, they were given another chance and eventually they became great servants of the Lord, and we can too.

c. We have learned that we must accept God's salvation before it is too late.

3. Because of his faith in Christ, this thief received salvation although his past was full of sin and unrighteousness.

8. We must forget our past failures and focus on our future successes.

2 Cor 6:2b
Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

4. No matter what we have done in our past, God will accept us and give us another chance if we are willing to follow His will.

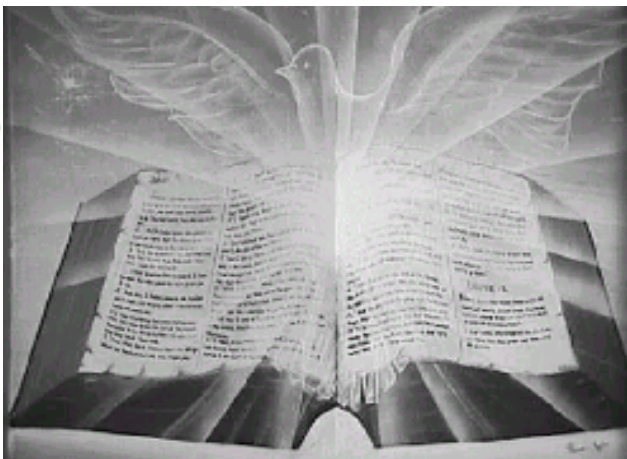
Paul put it this way *"But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 3:13-14)

I have given this message once at the Jail and twice at the prison. It has been amazing to me to see how Gods word truly does not come back void. I t doesn't matter how bad I mess it up in presentation, He still uses it to His glory.

(3) THIRD, WE LEARN THAT WE MUST ACCEPT GOD'S SALVATION BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

There have been some added benefits from the mural. When in counseling and the inmate starts saying they are innocent, I point behind me and say Jesus is without sin and He still "road the beef" for us. I'm able to tell them that no matter what they have done He will forgive them, that like the thief on the cross, just do it while there is still time. Even the condemned criminal can be covered by the blood

1. The other thief on the cross had an opportunity to get his life right with God but he chose not to. His life ended without salvation. Maybe if he had



Here is a mural done some time in the past. Black & white doesn't do it justice. The dove representing the Spirit is radiating out of the Word. You can actually read the scriptures on the page out of John.



This mural is behind another desk in the office. It is more than a little appropriate that an angel is pushing a demon into the abyss. There is definitely a spiritual battle waged daily there.

Prayer Requests



service for Mary Ellen Baca. For anyone that was there I am sure they would agree it was one of the most moving services you will ever go to. To me personally it meant a lot and something I'll never forget.

But something that came out of that day was so cool I just have to share it with everyone who reads this.

Mary Ellen had worked at the women's prison in Corona for about 28 years. A number of the people at the service were from the Department of Corrections.

We as a ministry have been trying to go to California Institution for Women (CIW) for the past six years to no avail. No matter what we tried nothing seemed to work.

Mary Ellen had tried many times to see if she could get that door opened for us. And it still did not help.

Well that all changed at Mary Ellen's service. The Warden for the prison was really blessed with the worship of *Scarlet Hope* and wanted to know how he could get them to the prison to play for the women. It just so happens the person he asked was a close friend of Mary Ellen's, she was the one following up for Mary Ellen on trying to help get us in there. So she

brought him over to talk to me and now we will be going in to do a concert for them very soon. It is being set up now and I'm sure that before the next newsletter it will have happened. I'll give the up date then.

Speaking of updates I plan to use the rest of this page to give some.....

One of the most important to mention is a request for prayer in regards to some very serious negotiations that are ongoing on how the county will handle us as Chaplains.

At this time I do not want to go into too much explanation. Just that it does have the potential to change or even end the ministry there for me at the county. I pray that isn't so, I really believe that God has called me to this. In my heart I know I belong there. (Never thought I would ever be saying that) I am convinced this is a Spiritual Battle of a grand magnitude. That is to be expected, it is the enemies domain and he sure doesn't want what we have been doing there to continue.

But I also am at peace with it. I really believe that God is in control and if I have to leave there it is His will and it means He has something else for me to do.

My prayer request is that Gods will would be done here. Its is my desire to stay right where I am serving Him. But if that is not where He wants me then so be it. There are many other Chaplains that this will effect in different ways so really I am asking for prayer for all of us. Praise God that the battle has already been won!

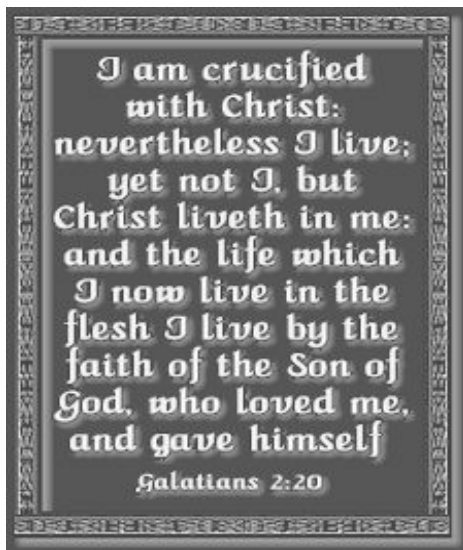
Another upcoming addition is we will be going into the Youth Authority to start that branch of our prison ministry. I already know that many of you are praying for us and I thank you for it and ask that you please continue to do so.

If the Lord is willing I will heading up to a

prison called California Men's Colony at San Louis Obispo. They are having a three day revival with "prison gang dropouts." I was asked to submit a application to go to this and I am right now waiting to hear if the administration there will allow me to come. If they do, it will make the fourth institution that the Lord has brought me back to that I myself served time at. If this keeps up I have only got a few more to go and I'll have gone back to all of them to proclaim the gospel. If I do get to go the dates are the 15th to the 17th of August. It is something else I would like to ask to be lifted up in prayer.

Another thing while I am asking, I will be starting Calvary Chapel Bible Collage this coming month. To just find the time and the ability to balance ministry with and everything else.

I know that God has opened doors, provided means and continues to be at the head of this ministry. I feel like I am in the front seat of the roller coaster hanging on for the ride of my life and really enjoying it!



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