

JUST 3

My daughter turned 19 on Monday. The time has passed by so quickly these past 19 years, and we are so proud of the young woman she has become. One of the things my daughter enjoys doing is going to the movie theater. She often refers to being at a movie theater with popcorn in hand as her happy place.

We decided to go to the movies as a family on Monday as one way to make her birthday special. The movie she wanted to see was not playing in Brantford, so we ended up driving to Ancaster to see it. When we entered the movie theater, we discovered we were the only ones there. We sat in our seats and began watching the preshow expecting more people would eventually enter. When the lights dimmed, and the movie began to play we were still the only people in the theater.

It was great to have the entire movie theater to just us. We did not have anyone behind us kicking our seats. Nor did we have to worry about a "Tommy Texter" or "Susie Talker" making our experience an unpleasant one like we did a few weeks earlier watching a movie in Brantford. We were free to laugh out loud, put our arms on the chair rests beside us, and talk amongst ourselves during certain scenes in the movie. Leading up to my daughter's birthday we had considered renting a small private movie theater so it could be just the three of us, but we got this experience on Monday night without having to pay any extra. Afterward we all commented what a blessing it was to experience the movie with just the 3 of us in the theater.

As I reflected upon this blessing of being just 3 while driving home that night, I was reminded of the blessed gift that we experience from having the "just 3" crosses on Good Friday. On the day Jesus was placed on the cross, Luke tells us that two other people were experiencing the same fate.

Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with Him. When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed Him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified - one on His right and the one on His left. (Luke 23:32-33)

On other days there may have been more people placed on crosses to be crucified, but on that Friday, there were "just 3." After they were placed on the cross and lifted up, Luke tells how the crowd, the religious leaders, and the

Roman soldiers began to scoff and mock Jesus. Matthew tells us in his gospel account that even the two criminals who were being crucified along side of Jesus began to ridicule Him. The one criminal continued to mock and make fun, but according to Luke the other one began to have a change of heart toward Jesus. This change of heart became evident when he stood up for Jesus by saying: **Don't you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn't done anything wrong.**

His change of heart was not only evident in his defense of Jesus, but also in making this profession of faith, **"Remember me when you come into Your Kingdom."** This change of heart on the thief's part and his profession of faith led to Jesus replying, **"I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."**

On Monday night our experience of being "just 3" was a very special blessing for us. The "just 3" moment that took place on the crosses that Friday when Jesus was crucified can also be a very special blessing for us depending on how it has changed our heart. Hopefully our hearts have been changed by the sacrificial love Jesus showed for us by taking our place on the cross so that our sins would be forgiven and our relationship with the Father would be restored. Hopefully we are taking this change of heart further by applying some of the lesson from the "just 3" moment on the crosses to draw closer to our Lord.

- ***Have we positioned Jesus in the middle of our lives as was His position with the 3 crosses?***
- ***Have we taken the assurance of being in paradise with Him one day as a result of our belief in Jesus and acknowledged the lasting peace that comes from this?***
- ***Have we confidence to show our faith in Jesus like the one criminal did when others scoff and make fun?***

Our "just 3" experience at the movie theater was a blessing for us as a family. May we take time during this season of Lent and Easter to reflect upon the "just 3" moment that took place on those crosses. By so doing, may we experience these blessings and appreciate our walk with Him even more.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean