

## **Easter Worship Program**

**Adapted from program by Major Beverly Leidy  
The Salvation Army US Southern Territory**

**Set-up:** At the front of the room cover a small round table with a pale green tablecloth. Place a premade Easter dish garden/ Easter grace garden on the table. You could also add some candles of various sizes to the table. Hold program in sanctuary if possible then move to another room for the craft.

Create a worship atmosphere with background music (CD or worship team) as women arrive.

**Welcome:** Today as we think about Easter, we will focus on a short, but life-changing conversation a dying thief had with Jesus on the hill of Golgotha.

**Scripture:** Luke 23: 42-43 (The Message)

*“Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you enter your kingdom.” He said, “Don’t worry, I will. Today you will join me in paradise.””*

**Worship Song Suggestions:**

*“The Old Rugged Cross”*

*“Who Am I”*

*“Amazing Grace-My Chains Are Gone”*

### **Prayer**

Invite women to share prayer concerns or place written requests on a cross or in a basket at the front. Have music playing in background once again.

### **Devotional**

When looking at the Easter story, verses 42 and 43 from this portion of Scripture are sometimes only touched on lightly. There were three crosses at Golgotha. Hanging on the middle cross was Jesus. To His right and left were two criminals who were thieves. Jesus was without sin, innocent of any crime and yet He was treated the same as the criminals. As the soldiers, religious leaders and others stood mocking Jesus, one of the criminals realized who He was. Though he was a thief, he somehow saw Jesus and knew He was the Son of God, the Messiah. He realized that Jesus could not save him from his earthly suffering, but He would free him from eternal suffering.

Scripture records that, “One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Him: ‘Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. Don’t you fear God, he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong’” (Luke 23:39-41). The thief who mocked Jesus only saw the earthly value of being saved from his immediate circumstances. The repentant thief expressed reverence for God and acknowledged his need of salvation.

The penitent thief, realizing his sin, cried out to Jesus, "Jesus remember me when You come into Your Kingdom" (verse 42). At the sound of that repentant cry, Jesus had mercy;" Jesus said to him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise'" (verse 43). Paradise is a place where people who are obedient to God go after death.

This sinner saw beyond what many others saw that day. Although Jesus' disciples continued to love Jesus, on that day at Golgotha their hopes for the kingdom were shattered. By contrast the repentant thief saw not just a man hanging beside him on a cross, but a Savior. When we confess and repent of our sins, God is faithful to forgive and accept us back into His family. How amazing was this man's faith? To all those around him, it appeared that Jesus' kingdom was finished. This man saw beyond the shame of the cross to Jesus' coming glory.

Sins come in all shapes and forms. We may not feel as if our sins are as bad as the sins of those thieves. However, to God there are no small sins. Sin is sin. We need to confront our actions and take ownership for anything that is against Jesus' teachings. As you look toward Easter, who do you see? Do you see just a man or a Savior? Repent and choose the life eternal that he offers to all who will acknowledge Him as Savior. WE, too can hear the voice of grace on the cross saying to us, "You shall be with Me in paradise."

#### **Worship Song or Vocal**

*I surrender All*

#### **Closing Prayer/ Grace**

#### **Craft**

Easter Dish Garden/ Grace Garden

The craft can be a reminder for the women of the special worship they can give God.

The following are three websites to help you create/complete this beautiful craft:

<http://www.aholyexperience.com/2012/03/a-family-christian-activity-for-easter-make-a-grace-garden-a-visual-parable/>

[www.tinyurl.com/bmcwq5b](http://www.tinyurl.com/bmcwq5b)

[www.tinyurl.com/d3ehxzm](http://www.tinyurl.com/d3ehxzm)

\*You may want to suggest ladies pay a small fee to cover cost of supplies for craft.

#### **Refreshments**