

Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-up Notes

March 15, 2026 // Pastor Andrew Keuer (andrew@firstprotestant.com)

Sermon Texts: Luke 23:32-34, 39-43
Sermon Title: “Soldiers, pt 5: Opportunities for Peace”
Link to Lent 5 sermon: <https://youtu.be/TYZbENs5YdQ>

Series: Stations of Peace (Lent 2026)

Key Points & Observations of the Text

It is suggested to read the passage (Luke 23:39-43) aloud as a group.

Opening discussion: Which skill-set is rare these days – invention of new things, or fixing of broken things? Why might God be more interested in ‘fixing’ our current relationships, rather than simply giving us new ones over and over again?

A bit deeper: The sermon describes the thief on the cross (traditionally called Dismas, meaning “west”) as a self-confessed criminal and robber who was experiencing the most shameful moment of his life. In that moment, he found peace with God. Why might God have wanted this man to run ahead of even the apostles into paradise?

The big idea: Every relational problem in our lives can actually be an opportunity for peace—if we see it through the lens of the cross.

I. Peace begins with an honest look at ourselves

- The thief openly confessed two things in his final moments: “I fear God” (recognizing God as the righteous judge) and “I deserve what is happening to me” (acknowledging his own guilt).
- Pastor Andrew called unguarded honesty “the back door” to peace – just as his grandparents always left the back door unlocked for family members, while the front door stayed locked.

Discussion: Why is honest confession of our sin and failure often the first and hardest step toward peace with God and with others?

II. The church should look more like an AA meeting than a performance

- The sermon contrasts the perfectionism and comparison we often bring to church with the raw honesty of the thief on the cross or the openness of writer Kurt Vonnegut in his personal letters.
- Jesus shows us that the community around the cross is a gathering of people who regularly say they stand under righteous judgment and need to be real with God and one another.

Discussion: How can you find an appropriate place for honest confession, undercutting the temptation to comparison & performance? What are inappropriate places to practice unguarded confession?

III. When we are honest, Jesus welcomes us into paradise

- “Jesus, remember me” – hears the promise: “Today you will be with me in paradise.”
- Paradise is Eden, and we remember that God posted an angel to guard the East side of Eden. But Dismas (“west”) entered the back door.

Discussion: Dismas shows us that even crumpled, ruined people are valuable to God. Just as a mangled \$100 bill is still worth \$100, God delights to show the ongoing value of broken relationships.