

Influence Ministries

THE COMEBACK

LESSON 2

TITLE: PARADISE IN A GARBAGE DUMP:

I believe in the grace of God, and I know God can forgive me but I'm not sure if I can forgive myself.

Maybe you feel like that, maybe you said something like that in your life.

God didn't necessarily come to make bad people good; God came to redeem people from their sins. And that's the greatest COMEBACK story ever told.

At the core of all our COMEBACK stories today, is the idea that no one has gone too far and none of us have done too much to disqualify ourselves from the love, the grace, and power that God came to bring into our lives.

The single greatest COMEBACK story was when God came to earth as a human. To buyback humanity from the garden of Eden.

What looked like a crushing blow at the beginning of time of God's master plan and what looked a disastrous start and not be an amazing COMEBACK story for mankind.

He didn't come back for any other reason than to pay the price for sin. He came to make victorious living within our reach.

On that fateful day of the crucifixion, we know Jesus was crucified with two criminals on either side of him. One begins to hurl insults challenging him to come down off the cross.

But the criminal on the other side, he understood who Jesus was and he said to the criminal across from Jesus and said, don't you fear God? He's an innocent man getting what he doesn't deserve but we are criminals receiving what we deserve then he sent this phrase, please remember me when you come in your kingdom.

Then Jesus turns to him and says, today you will be with me in paradise.

In essence, Jesus told him, your story is changing today.

I think the takeaway here is, if you reach out to Me, I will come toward you with mercy and grace.

I will enable you to build an amazing COMEBACK story in your life. And that's how simple and profound the beauty of the story of Jesus is.

The other criminal, however, was hanging potentially 6 feet from Jesus but could not see the mercy and grace that could have been extended to him.

We must come face-to-face with this if we want the COMEBACK and the miracle and the grace of God to rush into our world and bring paradise into our mess then we must admit that we need.

And sometimes for a lot of us, that's the hardest thing to admit.

We must admit that we made the wrong choice, that we messed up and we are willing to own it and ask God for his mercy. God, I need you to remember me.

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This is the path to your amazing COMEBACK story that God is wanting to write.

The other path that we too often take is the path of thinking we have gone too far, and we have broken promises of God and the people we love so we are afraid to ask God, remember me.

We are embarrassed and consequently in that guilt and shame.

In this series, God is looking to write some COMEBACK stories. The stories that rebuild your faith and the stories that bring glory to Him.

When this criminal asked mercy from Jesus that's exactly what he received, and he began his COMEBACK story at that point.

Imagine meeting this guy and asking him what his story was. He said I was reckless; I was careless and I was an idiot and a criminal.

I lived without God but in my closing moments, mercy placed me next to Him. And I saw my chance to reach out to Him.

I was a breath away, a moment away, an inch from eternity and Jesus stepped in and rescued me.

Now I'm standing in paradise. That is the ultimate COMEBACK story.

God is wanting to say this word to you... today.

I will forgive you, today.

I will have mercy on you, today.

I will wipe the slate clean, today.

We will start over again, today.

I know it sounds too easy. God is the one who says, today. All things are possible with God.

We need to celebrate the power and mercy that God is offering us.

The power of the cross allows us to re-write the story that drifted off the good path.

At the end of your story, you have the power to blame God or ask Him for mercy.

If you will reach out to Him and pray that prayer. Jesus have mercy on me, Jesus remember me.

This is the gospel story in the middle of the mess.