



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

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It's A Miracle

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

In the first few months of the 1992 season, Fred Couples was playing some exceptional golf. He had already won twice before heading to The Masters, plus he was sitting on top of the world golf rankings.

Fred continued his strong play at Augusta, trailing leader Craig Parry by one stroke after three rounds. Couples jumped in front of the pack heading into the back nine on Sunday, but no less than five golfers were within four shots of the lead.

Things got interesting when the final group arrived at Hole #12, the beautiful 155-yard Par Three known as Golden Bell. Couples' tee shot was short, hitting the steep bank in front and began rolling towards a "watery grave" in Rae's Creek.

But somehow, the ball stopped inches from the water. Here's how Furman Bisher, a writer who had been covering The Masters since 1950, described it: 'In my 42 years of coming here, I can't ever remember a ball staying on that bank.'

Taking advantage of what he called "the biggest break of my life," Couples chipped up to two feet, saved par, and claimed the green jacket. When people talk about miraculous moments at The Masters, Fred Couples' tee shot hanging on the bank at Golden Bell will always be included.

Speaking of miracles, most scholars indicate that Jesus performed somewhere around 35 miracles during his time on earth. However, I believe an event described in Luke 23:32-43 qualifies as a miracle, although I've yet to find it included on any list.

This miracle has two parts. The first is the thief hanging next to Jesus, who recognized who Jesus was. Think about the many people who met Jesus, questioned His identity, and did not believe in Him.

Not only the Pharisees and others who opposed Him, but also some of His closest friends and followers – His family (Mark 3:20-21) and some of His disciples (Matthew 28:16-17).

Even John the Baptist, who baptized Him and heard the voice of God praising Jesus as His Son, had doubts (Luke 7:18-20). But somehow this thief, who knew Jesus only by hanging next to him on a cross, recognized that He was indeed the long-awaited Messiah.

The second part is Jesus' response to the thief's request. After living a life filled with sin, the thief figured the best he could hope for was to be remembered.

But Jesus' response went far beyond that request. He replied that the thief would be in paradise – saved, that very day, with Jesus! This is the miracle of salvation that Paul describes in Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

No matter what your past is, this story proves that even a lifetime of bad decisions can be overcome by one good one – to accept Jesus as Lord. That qualifies as a miracle.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the miracle of salvation, accomplished not by what we do but by what your Son did on the Cross at Calvary. Amen

John Bown

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