

King Of All  
Luke23:33-42  
Archibald Wallace

Today is Christ The King Sunday. In the Liturgical Year, it is the last Sunday, and it is last because it summarizes who Christ is. The church year starts with Advent, a time to prepare for God's coming to us, then Jesus is born and we celebrate. The church year then follows the preparation of Jesus for his ministry, and then his ministry. The church ends with Jesus being recognized as king of Kings and Lord of Lords. Usually, we approach this Sunday as a day of triumph and recognition; rarely do we look at the day from the viewpoint of Jesus' earthly death on this day; this year we will. I want us to take another look at that final day, those final hours, and see what we really ought to get when we say Christ is King.

Our first reading comes from Luke 23:33-43. It is the scene of Jesus' crucifixion. The trials are over, he has been sentenced. He is at Golgotha, the place of execution. He is surrounded by a host of people.

The Roman soldiers are there, carrying out orders to execute this Jesus. To Rome, Jesus was a political problem, because he was claiming to be a king and Rome couldn't let that happen.

The church's leaders are there, the ones who wanted to get rid of Jesus because he was pulling the people in the pews away from them.

The Jewish political leaders were there. They wanted Jesus gone, because if he kept on, Rome might take their limited self-rule away.

Two robbers were there; they deserved what was coming for them.

The crowds were there, watching, wondering. and finally, Jesus' family and followers were there. They were full of dismay, and they were afraid. What if they were next?

This collection of folks will each play a part in the events that came next. Let's listen for God's word to us.

Luke 23:33-43

- 26 As the soldiers led Him away, they seized Simon of Cyrene....and made him carry the cross behind Jesus.
- 27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.
- 32 Two other men, both criminals were also led out with him to be executed
- 33 When they came to the place called the skull, Golgotha, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left.
- 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." And they divided up his clothing by casting lots.
- 35 The people stood watching, and the Jewish rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others, let him save himself, if he is Gods Messiah, the Chosen One.
- 36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar,
- 37 and they said, "if you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."
- 38 There was a written notice above him which read: This Is The King Of The Jews.
- 39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him, "Aren't you the Messiah?"

- Save yourself and us.”
- 40 But the other criminal rebuked him, “Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same sentence?”
- 41 We were punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”
- 42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”
- 43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

#### The word Of The Lord

It is amazing to me to see Jesus, moments away from death, a real, painful, tortured death, could still live out his ministry, could still practice forgiveness and compassion.

Yet, here Jesus is, forgiving the Roman soldiers, who were mocking and taunting him and who were crucifying him, forgiving the criminal who called on God and asked Jesus to remember him. These two acts of forgiveness just before his end on earth are here to draw our attention to why Jesus came in the first place, to forgive, and to show him living his faith to the very end. The message for us: So should we live our faith fully to our very end, and so should we forgive, even those who would do us in. The message is: Is there someone you need to forgive today? It’s not too late; you still have breath.

A second way Jesus practiced his faith, even at his crucifixion, was by loving his enemies. He didn’t try to get even. He didn’t say nasty things about them. He didn’t turn his back on them---he forgave them and loved them. The message for us is> Is there an enemy we need to forgive today> It’s not too late.

A third way Jesus practiced his faith to the end was by practicing non-violence. Is there any doubt that if Jesus had cried out to heaven to come and help him, that an army of millions would have come? He didn’t cry out. He knew he had come to die. Jesus let the Romans and the misguided church leaders, and the local rule Sadducees have their day, because he knew this moment at Golgotha was what he had been sent to do.

Jesus was in this scene fulfilling what had been planned from the beginning, He had come to take our place, to pay our debt, to redeem us by his death and sacrifice. God’s plan was almost in place, almost finished with the set-up, almost ready for us to take to the world. The plan so long promised was being fulfilled at that very moment, and in a way that fulfilled Scripture. Psalm 22 is all about Jesus, the real Jesus, not the one imagined by the church of Jesus’ day. Psalm 22 sings of a man who felt forgotten by God, a man who was scorned and mocked, a man who was insulted, a man surrounded by people acting like wild bulls and lions, ready to tear him apart. Psalm 22 talks about those around him staring at him, gloating at his fall, gambling for his very clothes. God’s plan had been laid out, specifically, completely, and the church didn’t get it. .

The Chief Priests, the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees had all seen God face to face, and they didn’t get it, They didn’t know him when they saw him. Every one of us sitting here considers those leaders as so wrong, so misguided, so evil. How could they see God face to face and miss it. Yet, we’re not any better.

When God is taught, do we know him?  
When God is sung, are we moved?  
When God is preached, are his words heard and understood?  
When God says follow me, do we?

No, no, no and no. And by saying no today, aren't we just another face in the crowd at his crucifixion, taunting and mocking with our modern life styles, our business, our commitment to everything but God?

This picture we see of Jesus at the cross nears its end reminds us of our own ends. Our ends are coming. We can only live for so many days. And then will come our journey through the valley of the shadow of death, just like all who have lived before. Will we be like the thief on the left or the one on the right? Will that last day of ours be followed by a rendezvous with Christ in paradise? Or will be doomed to the nothingness of forever? Jesus promised a forever in his kingdom. Jesus came to give us life, if we only could do what one of the criminals did that day—believe. The criminal asked Jesus to remember him, and Jesus said yes, today, right now, I will and I do. This story tells us it is nevertoo late for us. But a day is coming when it will be, if ...

Do you need to ask God today to remember you in his Kingdom.

And finally there is the sign over Jesus' head. It read, "This is the King of the Jews." No he wasn't. No he isn't. Jesus is way bigger than Rome had any idea. He wasn't a petty king of a province far, far from Rome. He was and is King of all. His reign has begun and it shall never end. The Apostle John saw Jesus in Revelation as the final judgment approached. Jesus was on a white horse, at the head of a mighty army, coming to destroy Satan and bring the Kingdom of God to its ultimate victory, and on his white robe his name was written: 'King of Kings, Lord of Lords,' and on his head were many crowns.

Today is Christ the King Sunday. Not just Christ the King of the Jews, but King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Isn't it time we stopped making so many other things kings of our lives, ahead of this Jesus who rules over all, and isn't it time we remembered that the only king that matters is the one who died for us on the cross, dying that we might live, living that we might live, ruling that we might live.

Amen

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Colossians 1:9-14

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God **to fill you with the knowledge of His will** through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.

10 so that you may **live a life worthy of the Lord** and please him in every way, **bearing fruit** in every good work, **growing in the knowledge of God**,

11 **being strengthened** with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great **endurance and patience**, (with joy)

12 and giving joyful thanks to the father, who has qualified you **to share in the inheritance** of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

13 For he has **rescued us** from the dominion of darkness and **brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves**,

14 in whom we have **redemption, (through his blood) the forgiveness of sin**.