

## Jesus the King of Glory

Text: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Colossians 1:11-20 (Series C. Christ the King Sunday) Ps. 46

Luke 23:36-43.

Let us pray:

**Lord, quieten our hearts that we may listen to Your still small voice, so that in hearing Your Word we may respond in fervent faith. As Jesus led disciples of old, so lead us your children today. We ask it his name. Amen.**

In the television show *"Reasonable Doubts"*. The story was about a female defense lawyer who represented a man convicted of two brutal killings before a parole board. He was seeking release from prison after serving 14 years and she succeeded in getting him released.

A police man who was present at the original crime scene gives the lawyer a rough time after the hearing, telling her that she should not be representing such people, that the man she was defending was nothing but scum.

Later that day the police officer discovers that the lawyer's mother had died from cancer the night before and so, the next time he sees the lawyer he says, "I'm sorry, if I had known your mother had died I would have gone easier on you."

This got me to thinking just how often we in fact do and say such things. It happens all the time - in the normal event of daily living - when we are moving too fast, we fail to recognize what is happening around us, - we forget what it is that we should be about.

Sometimes we too say and do things that later, we realize that we have blown it - that we have acted inappropriately, and we seek out the person concerned and in almost every case we say something like:

- ❖ if I had known, I would not have asked you that,
- ❖ if I had known, I would not have said that,
- ❖ if I had known, If only I had known....

So, what help can we get from today's readings to help us to understand a bit more about what will happen on the last day? At first, we might wonder why a section of St Luke's Passion narrative has been chosen for today the Last Sunday of the Church Year. We usually read that on Good Friday.

Concerning the end times, what hope will we have as everything we hold special and precious in this life disappears and we stand face to face with a righteous God? Where will I find help and comfort as the final day approaches?

Let's not just think about the end of the world but the end of the world for each of us? The thought of leaving everything that we have cherished and worked hard for in this life can be very depressing. I like it here – we like it here, we don't want to leave, we don't want to die.

Not only will the last day bring about the end of everything we enjoy on this earth but there will also be a final judgment. God will ask me and you how well our faith has affected our daily life.

He will examine how faithful we have been to Jesus and his mission. Have I given food to the hungry, a cup of water to the thirsty, or visited the sick? God will *scrutinize* all my excuses, which is in fact a skin of truth stuffed with lies.

Luke and the apostle Paul see Jesus not just as a man who was wrongly condemned to death. They described him as lord and king of glory, someone who has authority and power – but so different to the kings and rulers of the world. In the history of the world, kings are usually figures of great wealth and power.

They lived in castles and palaces; wore extravagant robes and crowns decked with jewels; hosted lavish banquets and entertained the world's rich and famous.

In history, kings and queens had little do with the ordinary people of their kingdoms. They moved about among elite while the commoners suffered hunger and disease.

In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he goes into great lengths to emphasize that Jesus is God's Son, he is everything that God is and that through him *"everything in heaven and on earth, the visible and invisible, including spiritual powers, lords, rulers, and authorities"* were created.

If he is the creator of all these then, he is also lord and king of everything in heaven and on earth. Paul goes on to say that Jesus is not only king of every part of creation, he is also head of the church; *"he is the source of the body's life"*.

Paul goes on to describe something very that makes Jesus different from other kings. He died on a cross. The King of kings and Lord of lords, God's Son, died on a horrible human instrument of torture and death (*Col 1:21*).

There is a fairy tale of how a king dressed up as one of the peasants and mingled with them, in the local village. But Jesus doesn't just dress up to be like us, he is one of us. He takes on our human nature and lived among ordinary people especially sinners and outcasts, including lepers and the demon possessed.

This King of kings and Lord of glory placed between two thieves, his clothes stripped from him, they call out, "If you are a king, then save yourself". As a joke, Pontius Pilate placed a sign above Jesus' head which read, *"This is the King of the Jews"*.

But on that hill outside of Jerusalem, there was one person who saw something in Jesus that no one else saw. In spite of the nails, the wounds, the blood, and the shame, one of the criminals crucified with Jesus recognized a king, a Saviour. He cried to Jesus, *"Remember me, Jesus, when you come as King!"* Jesus promised him, *"Today you will be in Paradise with me"*. A place of Rest.

**Here is a story:** Ruth went to her mailbox and there was only one letter. She picked it up and looked at it before opening, but then she looked at the envelope again. There was no stamp, no postmark, only her name and address. She read the letter. Dear Ruth:

*I am going to be in your neighborhood Saturday afternoon and I'd like to stop by for a visit. Love Always, Jesus.*

Her hands were shaking as she placed the letter on the table. "Why would the Lord want to visit me? I'm nobody special. I don't have anything to offer." With that thought, Ruth remembered her empty kitchen cabinets.

"Oh, my goodness, I really don't have anything to offer. I'll have to run down to the corner store and buy something for dinner." She reached for her purse and counted out its contents.

Five dollars and forty cents. "Well, I can get some bread and cold cuts, at least." She put on her coat and hurried out the door. A loaf of French bread, a half-pound of sliced turkey, and a carton of milk leaving Ruth with grand total twelve cents to last her until Monday.

Nonetheless, she felt good as she headed home, her meager offerings tucked under her arm. "Hey madam, can you help us, madam?" Ruth had been so absorbed in her dinner plans, she hadn't even noticed two figures huddled in the alleyway.

A man and a woman, both of them dressed in little more than rags "Look madam, I ain't got a job, ya know, and my wife and I have been living out here on the street, and, well, now it's getting cold and we're getting kinda hungry and, well, if you could help us. madam, we'd really appreciate it."

Ruth looked at them both. They were dirty, they smelled bad and frankly, she was certain that they could get some kind of work if they really wanted to. "Sir, I'd like to help you, but I'm a poor woman myself.

All I have is a few cold cuts and some bread, and I'm having an important guest for dinner tonight and I was planning on serving that to Him." "Yeah, well, okay madam, I understand. Thanks anyway."

The man put his arm around the woman's shoulders, turned and headed back into the alley. As she watched them leave, Ruth felt pain in her heart. "Sir, wait!" The couple stopped and turned as she ran down the alley after them.

"Look, why don't you take this food. I'll figure out something else to serve my guest." She handed the man her grocery bag. "Thank you, madam. Thank you very much!" "Yes, thank you!" It was the man's wife, and Ruth could see now that she was shivering. "You know what, I've got another coat at home.

Here, why don't you take this one." Ruth unbuttoned her jacket and throw it over the woman's shoulders. Then smiling, she turned and walked back to the street...without her coat and with nothing to serve her guest. "Thank you, madam! Thank you very much!"

Ruth was chilled by the time she reached her front door, and worried too. The Lord was coming to visit and she didn't have anything to offer Him. She fumbled through her purse for the door key.

But as she did, she noticed another envelope in her mailbox. "That's odd. The mailman doesn't usually come twice in one day." She took the envelope out of the box and opened it.

Dear Ruth: *It was so good to see you again. Thank you for the lovely meal. And thank you, too, for the beautiful coat. Love Always Jesus.* The air was still cold, but even without her coat, Ruth no longer noticed.

A strange king indeed – suffering, weak, humiliated, despised, rejected and dying. But the death of this unlikely king made us friends with God through his death. God was going to stop at nothing to break down all barriers between him and all people.

He was even prepared to let the King of kings and Lord of lords die in order to make everything right again between him and us. Our sin has been wiped away. Forgiven. Forgotten. *"Today you will be with me in Paradise".*

At a moment when all would seem to be hopeless and without a future. Jesus pardons and assures the man that he will be with him in Paradise. The word 'paradise' indicates a garden or a park, a place of Rest.

No earthly king would invite a robber to walk in his garden, but Jesus, the king, died for that man and made it possible for him to be "*holy, pure, and faultless*" and welcome. When we die, we too will be welcomed into Paradise because Jesus has made us "*holy, pure, and faultless*".

We have arrived at the final Sunday in the Season of Creation and also the Last Sunday after Pentecost in the Lectionary season, both of which celebrate Christ the King. Coming next, we begin the Season of Advent, preparing for the birth of the Child in whom the fullness of God is pleased to dwell.

It seems strange that as we celebrate Christ as King that we end on the Gospel of Luke at the Crucifixion. Yet, without the *Crucifixion* and *Resurrection* of what is the purpose of Advent? For me, the crux of this Sunday's lessons is the moment in Luke's Gospel where the contrast is made between the hard-bitten criminal and that of the repentant one.

If the thought of the last day of our life or the last day of everything fills you with fear then be consoled by the fact that we have a *Living* King. Yes, he did die on the cross, but while there, he spoke of the future. "*Today you will be with me in Paradise*". For us who endeavor to follow, Christ our King. He will show us the way to the true and never-ending Kingdom, *Paradise*. We are Easter people remember that: Jesus promises us a future after death to all who would believe. **Amen.**