

Christ the King Sunday
November 24, 2019
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Church of the Holy Cross

Jesus, Remember Me

Usually, when you celebrate a coronation there is an awesome party, and excitement fills the air, and just about everyone is in a good mood. Weddings, Ordinations, Installations, Grand Openings usually feel that way. There is hope and anticipation that something new and good is coming, bringing with it new ways of being in relationship with those honored and with each other.

Today is Christ the King Sunday, and it was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925, and we celebrate it on the final Sunday of what we call Ordinary time – the last Sunday before Advent – yes, Christmas is coming. This day reminds us of Jesus’s death and celebrates that Christ is the King kings, and Lord of lords, wonderful and marvelous. Yet, the Gospel takes us to what we feel is the darkest hour of our Journey with Jesus – His crucifixion. Even the inscription above His head “This is the King of the Jews.” Was placed there as a public shaming of Jesus and of all the Jews. Jesus was mocked by soldiers, lots were cast for his clothing, and all of this after the trials in front of Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again. Pilate found no wrong doing, but washed his hands of the whole thing. This is where the Gospel picks up, with Simon of Cyrene walking with Jesus and arriving at the place of the skull. I am not sure about you, but so far, I do not feel much like celebrating.

Here we are with Jesus, at the crucifixion, and two criminals are with Him. One kept mocking Jesus like the soldiers, and advocating for himself, “Hey, Messiah, why don’t you save yourself and cut us loose too while you are at it?” The other criminal, argued back that they were both guilty, deserved their punishment, and that he needed to show some respect. He continued, and said the words that we all say in our hearts, “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

One criminal being crucified with Jesus, gets it. One is accountable for his crimes and acknowledges that his crucifixion is justified. The other criminal wanted his world fixed right now. What happens to the quick fix criminal? What happens to us when we are so filled with self-righteousness, that we cannot not see what we are doing, and we will not ask for forgiveness? Follow the example of the repentant criminal and ask, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus said He would remember the repentant man, and He will remember us as well. Jesus has never been about proving his power. He is all about living by example. And that is clear in the compassion He shows even for those who are doing the crucifying when he says, “*Father forgive them for they know not what they have done.*” Showing compassion, over wielding power is something that I think the world needs more of, right now. We all need to, slow down, and contemplate the impact of our actions, because our sin is not what keeps us from God. (2x) What keeps us from God is our inability to receive God’s love, freely given, and then repent and change. As journalist Daniel Harris put it, “*Sin is the choice to minister to ourselves, rather than allow the savior to minister to us; and often we preclude that divine help by removing ourselves from community.*” Father forgive us for we know not what we do – when we isolate ourselves from each other.

We need to recognize and be accountable for our wrong-doing, and then we need to ask for forgiveness, and forgiveness will not be denied. There will be a place for us in the kingdom, but we must be accountable, and repent.

Jesus was innocent and yet condemned. This is still the case in our world today, the innocent, misjudged, marginalized, poor -- people who look different from others, are often condemned and judged by our flawed thinking. More and more we learn that our prisons are filled with people who were judged

unfairly. We tend to judge based on information that is fear driven, and not born of love and understanding. Jesus identifies with the marginalized, downtrodden, and all sinners who have lost their way. When we see the truth, we need to recognize it and proclaim it to the world. When we ask Jesus to remember us when He comes into His kingdom, the door to paradise will be opened for us too. This is the truth of the kingdom, and this is the Gospel that got us there. It is one thing to think that Jesus is King, and another to know it in our hearts, and proclaim it to the world. But, when we do that, the rejoicing begins! Jesus came, as the Canticle says, *“To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

Paul’s letter to the Colossians has a lighter tone to it, and I wanted to look more closely at it today as well. There is good news in Paul’s message, news that we should celebrate. I want to deliver Paul’s message to you in my own words, because it rings true for me as a message to all of us at Holy Cross.

Here is my version of Paul’s letter to you: *I pray that God gives you strength to deepen your faith, and grow in your spirit. I pray you will be given the gift of patience, and the gift of joy that comes when your understanding of God’s love moves from your head to your heart. May light shine in you, may you forgive others and know that you are forgiven. Along with all the saints, we are walking in the light, rescued from the darkness, redeemed and forgiven.*

Jesus is our image of God, fully divine and fully human. Jesus is the firstborn of all creation and through Him all things have been created – Jesus is the light that shines through the Holy Spirit, connecting all of creation. Jesus is how we relate to the incomprehensible, divine being that is God. Through Jesus, we are one with God, connected by the Spirit. When we proclaim the truth, the life and light that is God, flows from us and connects us to each other. Amen

*There’s a light in the darkness of everybody’s life.**

May you recognize Jesus as Christ the King. May you be connected to Jesus in your head and in your heart, and through Him connected to each other. May light and peace surround you all the days of your life. May you know the joy of proclaiming the truth, and being washed clean of your sins. May love surround you always. May Jesus remember you when he comes into His kingdom. The thing is, He is already there, waiting for you to proclaim the truth.

Today during Formation Hour, we will/have made Advent Wreaths and learned a little about the meaning of the season. Next week we start a new church year, and we have a new opportunity to walk in the light. Next week we will begin the slow journey toward Christmas, and more than ever, I want you all to remember that God has set us free, and has shined a light in our darkness. We are here, on this last Sunday of ordinary time. Take a deep breath, relax, and let go of what is past – a new year is beginning. Breathe deep, and fill yourself with God’s peace, remembering the words from Psalm 46, *“Be still, then, and know that I am God.”* Amen

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Harris_\(journalist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dan_Harris_(journalist))

*Rocky Horror Picture Show

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Canticle 16

Colossians 1:11-20

Luke 23:33-43

(Track 2 of the lectionary for today includes Psalm 46)