

Christ the King – November 24, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

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Luke 23:35-43 (EHV)

The people stood watching. The rulers were ridiculing him, saying, “He saved others. Let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!” 36 The soldiers also made fun of him. Coming up to him, they offered him sour wine, 37 saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” 38 There was also an inscription written above him: “This is the King of the Jews.” 39 One of the criminals hanging there was blaspheming him, saying, “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” 40 But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same condemnation? 41 We are punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done, but this man has done nothing wrong.” 42 Then he said, **“Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.”** 43 **Jesus said to him, “Amen I tell you: Today you will be with me in paradise.”**

Dear Friends in Christ – the anointed one, our King;

When we speak of Jesus as the Christ, we are speaking of him as the anointed one – one chosen, set apart and empowered for a particular office. In OT times God often would set apart individuals for a particular office (such as a prophet, priest or king) by having them anointed with oil – oil was poured on their heads. In Exodus 28 we hear that the Lord instructed Moses to set apart Aaron and his sons to serve the Lord as priests. **You shall make tunics for Aaron’s sons, and you shall make sashes for them, and you shall make small pointed turbans for them, to give them honor and splendor ... anoint them, and ordain them for their work and consecrate them, so that they may minister to me in the priest’s office.** (Exodus 28:40-41 EHV)

The Lord gave these instructions to the prophet Elijah: ... **Anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah as prophet in your place.** (1 Kings 19:16 EHV)

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit the prophet Isaiah voiced the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he wrote: **The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the afflicted. He sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for those who are bound...** (Isaiah 61:1 EHV)

The events of Holy Week give us ample opportunity to behold Christ our anointed King. On Palm Sunday, Jesus is hailed as the Son of David. The Jews brought Jesus to Pilate and asked him to have Jesus put to death because he claimed he was a king. The soldiers of Pilate mocked Jesus by placing a crown of thorns on his head. And the notice on Jesus cross declared: Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. The only other event which would give us a similar opportunity to behold the Kingship of Christ would be his ascension or return to heaven as our exalted Savior and King. Our text for today shows us Jesus establishing his Kingship by overcoming sin for us.

Theme: Behold Your King

1. He is mocked by his enemies
2. He is confessed as king by a repentant sinner
3. He is preparing a place for us in his kingdom

It certainly would not surprise us to hear Jesus’ friends and disciples calling him the Christ and hailing him as a King. But what is amazing to me is how often we see Jesus’ enemies speaking of him in terms which describe his role as our Savior and King. Think for example of Caiaphas the High Priest who proclaimed: **You do not even consider that it is better for us that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.**” John explains to us: **He did not say this on his own, but, as high priest that year, he prophesied**

that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not only for that nation, but also in order to gather into one the scattered children of God. (John 11:50-52 EHV)

In a similar fashion the Lord uses the mocking the words of Jesus enemies to describe him as a King. They intended their use of Kingly titles to mock rather than praise the Lord. **The people stood watching. The rulers were ridiculing him, saying, “He saved others. Let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!”** Perhaps at one time, some of these people had hoped that Jesus would set their nation free from the Roman government and establish an earthly kingdom ... but that hope did not come to pass. Still thinking of Jesus and his salvation in political rather than in spiritual terms they challenged Jesus to save himself to prove that he was the Christ. In their mind, Jesus was suffering the judgment of God. His dying was proof that he was not the Christ, the Chosen One. But they had failed to take to heart the words and promises of God concerning his anointed one.

It was the prophet Isaiah who described Jesus not only as the anointed who would preach good news to the poor and proclaim freedom and the year of the Lord’s favor but also as a suffering servant who would bring peace to his people by bearing their curse and punishment.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man who knew grief, who was well acquainted with suffering. Like someone whom people cannot bear to look at, he was despised, and we thought nothing of him. 4 Surely he was taking up our weaknesses, and he was carrying our sufferings. We thought it was because of God that he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, 5 but it was because of our rebellion that he was pierced. He was crushed for the guilt our sins deserved. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. he had done no violence, and no deceit was in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him and to allow him to suffer. Because you made his life a guilt offering, he will see offspring. He will prolong his days, and the Lord’s gracious plan will succeed in his hand. (Isaiah 53:3-6, 9-10 EHV)

The actions of Jesus enemies declared him to be the King promised of Old and prophesied by Isaiah as well as the Psalmist David who gave voice to the Lord’s anointed one: **All who see me mock me. They sneer. They shake their heads. 8 They say, “Trust in the Lord.” “Let the Lord deliver him. Let him rescue him, if he delights in him.”** (Psalm 22:7-8 EHV)

By dying for the sins of all Jesus was establishing his spiritual kingdom. Jesus the king had to die, so that we could be members of his kingdom. From the beginning God had promised to send a Savior to save the world from sin – the people of the OT called this one the Messiah or Christ – they regarded him as one who would be anointed with the Holy Spirit and as one who would rule on the throne of David forever. In many ways the title or name Christ meant King as it was used by the people of Jesus’ time.

The term “the chosen one” was also a kingly title. The rulers of the people knew that the Christ would be chosen by God to bring justice to the nations and that he would be highly favored by God. **Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I am placing my Spirit on him. He will announce a just verdict for the nations.** (Isaiah 42:1 EHV)

But what they did not understand was that the only way he could bring justice to the nations was by taking the punishment the nations deserved upon himself to set them free from that punishment. Once again by his suffering Jesus was proving that He was the chosen one, but the rulers could not see this. Everything that was happen was pointing out that Jesus was a true King – not only of the Jews but of the nations.

And none of this was happening just by chance ... it was all a part of God's plan and promise. Even the actions of the soldiers were foretold in the Psalms: **For my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.** (Psalm 69:21 EHV)

The soldiers also made fun of him. Coming up to him, they offered him sour wine, 37 saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription written above him: "This is the King of the Jews." 39 One of the criminals hanging there was blaspheming him, saying, "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Pilate intended the written notice which was placed above Jesus on his cross as a taunt to the Jews. In the eyes of unbelievers his words were a cruel joke – but they spoke the truth as it had been revealed in Scripture non-the-less.

Behold Your King as He is mocked by his enemies and as He is confessed as king by a repentant sinner. While one of the criminals who was crucified with Jesus joined in mocking in him; the other one acknowledged his sins and confessed his faith in Jesus as his King. **But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same condemnation? 41 We are punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done, but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom."**

Once again we notice an amazing and unexpected turn of events. It is a condemned criminal who brings the truth to light by his confession of Christ as King. He rebukes the criminal who was making fun of Jesus – warning him to stop what he is doing. He points out that each of them were dying and soon would stand before the judgment seat of God. They were being punished justly for their crimes and soon they would also have to give answer to God for their crimes. But that wasn't the case with Jesus. As the repentant criminal confessed, he had done nothing out of place, he had done nothing wrong.

We can see from his words that God had brought him to faith and repentance. Often God uses the fear of death to point out the need for a proper fear, respect and trust of him. The criminal knew he was a sinner, he knew the wages of sin was death and he was afraid. He had no excuses, no works, nothing that could make him right with God. In faith he looked to Jesus and pleads for his mercy – **"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."** His plea leads us to behold Jesus as our King and our Savior. He is the only one who called Jesus by his Savior name.

Isn't his plea the same plea that you and I have as we confess our sins and our faith in Jesus? Lord Jesus, remember me – turn to me in grace and do not deal with me according to my sins. Have mercy on me. Plead my case before your heavenly Father. Intercede for me with him. Include me in the prayer you prayed as the nails were being driven through your hands: Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.

The thief on the cross did not believe what his eyes and reason told him – rather he believed what his ears had heard. Had he heard the words of Isaiah which spoke of the Messiah as one who would suffer? If so he believed those words as he witnessed Jesus fulfilling them. There can be no doubt that he heard Jesus speak of himself as God's son when Jesus prayed, Father forgive them. Because he believed that Jesus was the Son of God he begged for mercy with his prayer – remember me when you come into your kingdom. He did not know when the Lord's kingdom would be revealed but he knew the time would come when **every eye will see him, including those who pierced him. And all the nations of the earth will mourn because of him.** (Revelation 1:7 EHV) He knew that **the time would come when every knee would bow before him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.** (cf. Rom 14:11 & Phil. 2:10) It was on that day that he wanted the Lord to remember him in mercy and take him to be part of his kingdom.

In Jesus' name and for his sake we pray that when the Lord returns that he will say to us: **Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.** (Matthew 25:34 EHV) And we can pray that prayer with confidence because our King has promised that he is preparing a place for us in his Kingdom. In response to the criminal's prayer, Jesus assured him: **Today you will be with me in paradise.**

That is a promise that enables us to face the prospect of our death without fear and without trembling. We know this is no empty promise because our King rose victorious from the grave and ascended into heaven where he is ruling over all things. On the basis of God's own word we believe that he will come again to take us to place where he has gone – to be with him in paradise. And so today we sing our praises to our eternal, living and ascended king even as we pray: Lord, remember me – deal with me in your grace and mercy here in time and hereafter in eternity. Amen.