

Sermon Proper 29 2019

November 24, 2019

Luke 23:27-43

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson previously read and Christ as our King.

**Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.** As the thief on the cross next to Jesus speaks those words, we hear it: Jesus is a king. This Sunday is the last Sunday of the Church Year, often called “Christ the King Sunday,” and as we think about that, we can see the relevance of this verse. **Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

Of course, Jesus isn't acting in a very kingly way here, is he? Or at least He doesn't look like a king as we think of them. I know this is a point that I make and that gets made a lot, but it's always good for us to revisit. Look at Jesus here. This isn't kingly. Where is He? He's on a cross. He's being put to death. They've divided His garments, He's numbered with the criminals, and the people are mocking Him. Look at how many times we see that in this lesson alone. I count three times. First, the rulers scoff at Him. Then the soldiers mock Him. Then the one criminal rails against Him.

This isn't kingly, is it? Where's the support from the members of the court? Where's the enforcer who's going to come and start cutting people down for their disrespect? Where's the legion that supposedly could come and make all of this like a bad dream? They're not coming are they? **Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

What kind of kingdom is this? What kind of kingdom prides itself in its weakness? What kind of king reveals His kingliness by restraining His authority? What is this happening here?

As I ask those questions, I think you all know. After all, that's why you're here. You know what this means. In fact, as I'm talking about the end of the Church Year with all of this you likely know what that means too. If not, that's OK, because there's a bit of it that's pretty subtle. What it is is this: in the Church Year we have two parts. There is the part from the beginning, which is the first Sunday in Advent through to the Feast of Holy Trinity, often sometime in early June. That portion is about the life of Jesus. And you see it. His coming is awaited in Advent, then He's born at Christmas.

After Christmas, He shows Himself to be God in the flesh of man in Epiphany. Then there's Lent in preparation for His death on Good Friday, with His resurrection following on Easter. After that, there's the Easter season celebrating until His Ascension forty days later, with Pentecost celebrating this Jesus giving His Holy Spirit to His Church ten days after the Ascension. Then the next Sunday is Holy Trinity. And that starts the season of the Church. That's the portion of the Church Year that we're in now. And in that we've been looking, in a sense at the life of the Church. The life of the Church in the world as we live as those redeemed and following our Lord.

What does this view that we have today, then, mean for us? Well, as we've been looking at the life of the Church, we've often seen how this Church, this Body of Christ in the world has to deal with trials, with temptations, with suffering. Here our Lord is experiencing all of that Himself, isn't He? Look at Him on that cross: the suffering of that cross; the temptation to come down and save Himself; the trial of enduring all of the beating and the mocking. All of this. He's identifying with weakness, your weakness. He's identifying with suffering, your suffering. He's identifying with death. Even the death you deserve in your sin.

And all the more, as He experiences all of this, there is the knowledge, then, that as He'll ultimately die, rise again, and ascend to sit at the right hand of the Father, that as He sits in that place, He sits there as One sympathetic with your trials. Whatever you have experienced, He knows the challenge of it and is sympathetic. Hear what the author to the Hebrews says in the fourth chapter: **"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."**

So there is comfort. This King will give you mercy as you come to Him with your prayers. As you lay your worries at His feet, there is grace because He knows what it is to be drawn to worry. He knows what it is to feel pain, to be mocked and ultimately to die. And so when you pray, there is a sympathetic ear hearing that prayer in grace. **Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

All the more, we can see this in the words He speaks: **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"** words spoken regarding the Romans who crucified Jesus there, regarding the Jews who crucified Jesus there, and regarding you whose sins

crucified Jesus there. And what a comfort, this sympathy, this grace. **Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.**

In fact as we look at this King, and we look at the words from the reading from Malachi, from the Old Testament Lesson, **“Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked,”** we see even more comfort. Now, you might hear that and say, “How so?” “How do we get comfort in hearing of this distinction between the righteous and the wicked?” After all, what is Malachi talking about there? Where will this distinction be seen? At the judgment at Jesus’ return, right? And like I said last week, I think with all of this when we really meditate on that judgment, we tremble some, don’t we? Don’t you do that? When you think about the fact that Jesus is returning in glory to judge the living and the dead, don’t you worry? When you hear that there is this separating of the sheep and the goats, and the sheep have clothed and fed Jesus by doing it for the least “of these,” don’t you worry that you haven’t fed and clothed the least of these enough? I think we all do. And as I said last week, insofar as we are sinners, we should. The reality is you haven’t clothed enough, you haven’t fed enough, you haven’t loved enough, and so He would be utterly right in casting us all aside with the goats, throwing us aside with the unrighteous.

But what do we see of this King? On the cross, what do we see? Do you recall the Deuteronomy 21 verse 12 that Paul quotes in his letter to the Galatians? **“Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”** Cursed is everyone nailed to a tree to die. Cursed is the One nailed to your tree of life that you would be forgiven. That’s this King, giving up the Kingdom for Himself to win it for you.

**O Jesus, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom.** As we hear those words again, it’s good for us to have something in mind. When God is called upon to remember, He doesn’t just think about something. It’s not like God hears that word, or Jesus hears those words and says, “Oh thief on the cross next to, me, I remember that. I remember how we were both hanging up there, you for you evildoing, me for the sins of the world.” It’s not like that. No, Jesus, God remembering something means He does something about what He remembers.

When the Psalmist says, “remember your mercy,” or “remember not my sin,” this is because he knows that if God remembers his sin, he’ll be punished, if God remembers His own mercy, the psalmist will see the action of God’s mercy and forgiveness applied to his sin. **Jesus remember me when You come into Your**

**Kingdom.** “Jesus when You are crowned as the King You are, bless me in that glory. Do something about Your remembrance of me.”

And what does Jesus say? **“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** That’s the promise of what this remembering will do: the thief in that kingdom with Jesus; the thief, enjoying the benefits of all the works, enjoying the mercy of his sin forgiven, enjoying the forgiveness for the sin that placed him on that cross next to Jesus even.

And of course, this is the word spoken to you as well. **“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** Today you will be with Me in paradise. Not necessarily this day, not necessarily November 24<sup>th</sup> will you be with Jesus in paradise, but the eschatological today, the Day of the Lord and His return.

That’s what this Kingdom means. And that’s why we pray for it to come, as we do in the Lord’s prayer. And so this Kingdom actually does come. This King brings His Kingdom to you now when you are baptized into this death and resurrection, united with the King. Just as He was united with humanity to be identified with your sin, your suffering, your pain, He has united you in baptism that you would be found in Him, freed, redeemed, made anew in His resurrection, where the victory of this King is declared

And so this Kingdom comes to you also in the His Word that forgiveness, in the body and blood. Think especially about that body and blood as we speak what we’ve just spoken. Why do have the Lord’s Supper? Do this in? Remembrance of me. This is not strictly you remembering Jesus, but it’s Jesus’ work brought to mind before the Father, for you. This King sitting in that position at the right hand of the Father, saying, “Look, Father, at what I have done for them. Love them Father, not because they’ve earned it, not because they deserve it, but because of what I did for them.”

Yes that’s this King. He sure doesn’t look very kingly on the cross, but as we see the blood dripping from His crown there, we know that blood is shed for us, that when His last day comes, that blood will speak on our behalf and on behalf of all who cling to that blood shed. So we say the same, **“Jesus remember me when you come into Your Kingdom.** Jesus You are our King, save us.” And so He says, **“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** Amen.