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St. Paul's Lutheran Church

2100 16th Street SW

Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels

Sermon preached on

November 24, 2019

24th & Last Sunday after Pentecost

Christ the King!

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 23:2-6, Colossians 1:13-20

Hymns: 239; 367; 361; 37:3 (244:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 23:35-43

³⁵ And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

³⁶ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself."

³⁸ And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew:

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁹ Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

⁴³ And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, King over all, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The image of a King!

On this last Sunday of the church year we turn our attention to Jesus as our King. Being that we are at the end of the church year and our thoughts tend to go to events we anticipate at the end of the world, the image that first comes to my mind for this Sunday of the Church is Christ's return in glory. All will know that He is the King. The catechism class is already anticipating the next passage in their Bible passage memory books because they think it too long! But it declares for us the glory that has been given to Jesus as our exalted Lord. *"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

(Philippians 2:9-11)

Yes, every knee shall bow before Christ Jesus. Every tongue, willing or unwilling, **every** tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! These are the kind of thoughts that come to mind for Christ the King Sunday, and how we anticipate that glorious reappearing of our Savior King!

But that passage started with the word "therefore." The word "therefore" reminds us that something came before that is cited as the cause of this exaltation to great glory for Jesus. What went before is no less a manifestation of Jesus as King, but it is a very different picture in which we see Jesus in depths of His humiliation rather than the pinnacle of His exaltation. It is however one that brings us to our knees in humble awe. It is all about -

THEME: Seeing our King on the Cross.

Many find the cross and the theology of the cross offensive, so as we observe Christ upon the cross, let us -

I. Beware of Mocking the King.

That is of course where our text begins, with mockery and derision of Jesus our Redeemer Lord.

Luke 23:35-37 “And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.’

³⁶The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.’ ”

It appeared obvious that for the Jews Jesus was the biggest disappointment of the year if not that entire period of history. This was the Man that the crowds had been praising as the King who came in the name of the Lord, as that promised Son of David. That was only a few days earlier, and now He was hanging on a cross, already severely beaten and scourged, with a crown of thorns pressed down upon His head, **dying**. He appeared helpless, totally humiliated. Public perception - “What a joke!” That was exactly where their minds were. They saw Jesus as fitting of no praise but only ridicule. The people stared and the leaders of the people mocked and derided: “*He saved others, let Him save Himself if He is the Christ!*” (v.35) Yes, they understood exactly what they were saying, better than we do. They made an absolute association between the Christ who was to come as the Anointed of God, and the one who was to be King, to sit upon the throne of David! The soldiers joined in the mockery. As Romans it was common enough to add derision to the sufferings of the condemned. They had heard enough to know that Jesus was supposedly some Savior and that the Jews were looking for one who could deliver them from the Roman legions! This man a king! He couldn’t even save Himself.

And yes, we need to mention that sign which Pilate had written and posted over Jesus' head and so that all could read it was printed out "*in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*" (v. 38)

While the chief priests and elders first objected to this decree because it spoke the truth they adamantly denied, it also led to much derision. Surely it instigated much of the ridicule and mockery among the Jews. Finally even one of the condemned criminals joined in the taunting of Jesus being King: "*Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.'*" (V, 39) Yes, one might think that must take some nerve when one person who is being executed mocks the one hanging on the cross next to him. But that is the way of the world. When someone appears to be in a weakened position, **attack**. Make yourself feel better by tearing down the next guy! Jesus was the brunt of many a joke, and any believers who stood by, stood by silently, tormented in their own hearts.

Why should we review all this? Well there are a couple of reasons for us to detail all this abuse as we consider Jesus as our King. The first of them is to contemplate upon the service of our King, and the depth of His love for a fallen mankind. Jesus endured all this in **our** place. Jesus was there in obedience to the will of the Father. And that will was that Jesus would endure the curse of the law save us from the curse of the law! Jesus was there upon the cross engaged in mortal combat against the devil. The weapons the devil was using against the King of the Jews was the taunting and the mockery, challenging Jesus to save Himself, and to come down from the cross, to simply see that this unbelieving rabble wasn't worth the agony He was enduring.

The second point is really where we began, that we should beware lest we also mock Christ the King on the cross. One's immediate reaction might well be, "Well, I never

would!" and yet we see and hear much mockery of Jesus as our crucified King. Some openly teach within the visible church that God would not have made such a gory plan, a bloody sacrifice. They propose that we should not look at this travesty as something that God not only condoned but orchestrated utilizing the stubborn unbelief of the Jews to serve His purpose of salvation. They teach that it is better to see Jesus' suffering as an example of patient endurance, which it is. They say that it is better for us to find in Him our example of securing our own righteousness, rather than finding atonement in His blood. And that is unbelief! That is mocking Christ the King upon the cross.

We need also beware of the devil's temptations to sin. The devil would have us look to the King suffering upon the cross and find there a license to sin. Since Jesus paid for all sin it doesn't matter if I sin, does it, as long as I intend to repent tomorrow? I can do that? How dare I abuse His love and grace? That is the ultimate mockery of our King! So beware of the devil's temptation. Let us not be like the criminal who challenged Jesus in unbelief and derision.

It is however important for us to look at Jesus, our King on the cross, and there see Him do what a King does for His people. It is all about --

II. Trusting Jesus as the Champion of our Salvation.

This takes faith, a very special kind of faith; **saving** faith that does not come by the will of man, but that is worked in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. There was one voice that spoke up and confessed such saving faith in Jesus as his King there at Calvary. It was not a voice we might expect. It was not an upstanding respected citizen, or a member of the council who had spent his life studying the Old Testament Scriptures, but rather a vile sinner, a condemned criminal. He looked at Jesus and saw his King, and he boldly confessed his faith in Jesus.

Luke 23: 40-42 “But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ ⁴²Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’ ”

He rebuked the other criminal. He reminded him that they were about to meet their Maker. They were criminals. They had done some horrible crimes for which they were sentenced to die a horrible death. When he looked at Jesus on the cross he saw an innocent man, not just sort of innocent, or innocent enough that He ought not be executed. **He saw a Man who had done nothing wrong.** Jesus was holy! Jesus was without any spot of sin on His conscience. His righteousness was whole and complete. That was evident from Jesus’ own words on the cross, words of forgiveness and love, and the perfect fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures. This criminal looked at Jesus and saw glory, the glory and majesty of his King!

This criminal’s faith went beyond that. He saw Jesus establishing His kingdom right before his eyes. His prayer-filled confession is an amazing testimony to the faith the Spirit had worked in his heart. “*Lord remember me when you enter you kingdom.*” (v.42) He didn’t see Jesus’ death as defeat; He saw Jesus’ death as Jesus securing the kingdom of God which was before them. In faith he prayed for the kind of remembrance that includes grace and favor. Just think of it, think about what this criminal saw with his eyes, a severely beaten, even brutalized man nailed to a cross! And yet what he saw with eyes of faith was a King, a champion who was securing life and salvation for sinners.

And Jesus’ reply was the response we all hold to as the words of our gracious King; “And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’ ” (v. 43)

Heavenly gates were opened for a sinner that day.
Heavenly gates were opened to us also because on that day the old evil foe was defeated by the King, the Champion of our salvation. It is with such eyes of faith that we behold our King. He appears before us as He is described in Revelation, as the Lamb that was slain, but we join our voices with the myriads of angels singing:

Revelation 5:12-13 “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

We end the church year with our faith focused on “Christ the King!”

He is the Champion of our salvation. He rules the world as the Head of His Church, for the advancement of His kingdom of which there shall be no end. He shall return in glory and on that Day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father! (Philippians 2:11)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.