

November 24th, 2019
The Lord Jesus, King of the Universe
Luke 23:35-43

[The people stood by and watched;] the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Background:

All the readings for this Feast are specially chosen to emphasize some theological aspect of Jesus as King of the Universe. The first impression that this gospel makes may be that it seems like a strange text for the feast of a king. The people, the rulers, the soldiers, and even one of the criminals hanging on a cross beside him ridicule Jesus. Jesus himself appears to be just another pathetic Jew caught in the Roman system of justice. He hangs on a cross with his crime clearly posted so that those passing can ridicule him too. The special inscription is meant to be a reminder to everyone of what happens to those who challenge the order of the Romans.

But the real truth is revealed in the statements that are spoken, even if they are uttered in cruel mockery. The statements are misguided because they come from people who believe that God, or even the Son of God, would act to prevent this crucifixion from taking place. Jesus maintains his silence in spite of all of their barbs. When he breaks his silence, it is to reassure a criminal, one condemned to the same cruel manner of death, that in fact he is not condemned. It is here, in the act of divine forgiveness, that Jesus reveals the authority that is his. He reassures this criminal that he will receive what he is asking for. In his cruel unjustified death, Jesus becomes the perfect sign of the invisible God. Jesus' death, so blatantly unjustified and cruel, points to a compassionate God, who is Love, and who loves all people and all of creation.

Reflection Questions:

1. Can you recall a situation when you thought you were supposed to do one type of task, and other people had totally different expectations of you?
2. When you think of Christ the King, what images, phrases, and feelings come to mind?
3. Why do you think the Church has chosen this text for the feast of Christ the King?
4. One of those crucified with Jesus said: "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us." What does his statement say about himself, Jesus, and his hopes?
5. The other criminal said: "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal... Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." What do his words express about himself, Jesus, and his hopes?
6. Can you take some time to talk with God about whatever thoughts and feelings this feast or this gospel raises within you?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Please include this information when printing or forwarding.

Excerpts from readings for November 24, 2019, Solemnity: Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Elders of the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said: “Here we are, your bone and your flesh. In days past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back. And the Lord said to you, ‘You shall shepherd my people Israel and shall be commander of Israel.’” King David made an agreement with them there before the Lord, and they anointed him king of Israel.

*Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.
I rejoiced because they said to me, "We will go up to the house of the Lord."
And now we have set foot within your gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem, built as a city with compact unity.
To it the tribes of the Lord go up, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
In it are set up judgment seats for the house of David.*

Brothers and sisters: Give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. His son Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. In him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. In him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, “He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God.” Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, “If you are King of the Jews, save yourself.” Above him there was an inscription that read, “This is the King of the Jews.” Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.”

The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply,
“Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation?
And indeed, we have been condemned justly,
for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes,
but this man has done nothing criminal.”
Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”
He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Excerpts from 2 Samuel 5:1-3; Psalm 122:1-5; Colossians 1:12-20; and Luke 23:35-43