

King of Glory Lutheran Church  
November 19/20, 2022  
Year C: Christ the King: Luke 23:33-43  
Rev. Debra Abbott

***Luke 23:33-43***

*33 When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. 35 And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." 39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."*

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

These words come from one of the men being crucified next to Jesus.

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Have you ever said these words or thought them or sung them? Remember me Jesus. Don’t forget me Jesus. Remember me.

No one wants to be forgotten. Especially not by God. We all want to be remembered.

Today we hear the crucifixion story that includes this conversation between Jesus and the criminals next to him. We hear Jesus being called Messiah and King of the Jews. And we have to ask ourselves why it is that a king is being crucified? Why is the anointed one, the savior, being put to death? What kind of king is Jesus that has led him to this place, this suffering and this death?

It’s a crowded scene there at the place where Jesus was crucified. People watching, leaders shouting, soldiers mocking and then the two criminals on either side of Jesus talking.

And then this man next to Jesus says, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

He understands that Jesus is king of a people and a kingdom that go far beyond this place of death and suffering. Jesus is a king like no other giving forgiveness from the cross, promising eternal life beyond death.

One of my favorite movies of the past few years is the movie “Coco.” If you know this movie you know that it is the story of a boy named Miguel who wants to be a musician and so this movie is filled with songs and music. One of those songs is called “Remember Me.” And it ends like this:

*Remember me, for I will soon be gone  
Remember me and let the love we have live on  
And know that I'm with you the only way that I can be  
So, until you're in my arms again  
Remember me<sup>i</sup>*

Miguel's great-grandfather wrote this song for his daughter Coco. Over time Miguel's family tried to forget the man who wrote this song but Coco always remembered.

There is a beautiful moment at the end of the movie when Miguel and Coco sing "Remember Me" together. This song helps Coco, who is at the end of her life, remember her father who loved her. And this song and this connection brings music and healing and joy to the entire family.

Moments of remembering and being remembered are holy. God invites us into these holy rememberings today.

On this Christ the King weekend we remember that Jesus is a king like no other. That he invites us into sacred and holy moments of remembering and being remembered.

The man dying next to Jesus asked, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Jesus remembers his people, meets them in suffering and holds them close. Jesus remembers you, meets you right where you are and will be with you always.

Karoline Lewis, Professor at Luther Seminary, writes about holy moments of remembering and knowing God's promises. She writes, "a fundamental distinction between Christ's reign and the reign of the world's is holiness...The holy does not take into account the rational or the reasonable. Instead, it envelops you. It overshadows you. It takes your breath away...Christ's reign reaches beyond what we see; beyond our now; even beyond our tomorrows."<sup>ii</sup>

That is what the man next to Jesus knew and hoped for. And that is what Jesus promised. Jesus is king and his "reign reaches beyond what we see; beyond our now; even beyond our tomorrows."

I know that as we enter into this week of Thanksgiving, closely followed by Advent and Christmas, each one of us wants to be remembered. The holidays put a special accent on the need to be remembered and remember others, but truthfully every day is an opportunity to remember and be remembered.

God invites you and me today into a season of holy remembering.

Remember today a holy moment, a holy experience of God's love when you knew that you were remembered and loved. Maybe you remember a holy moment when you were surrounded by people who were friends or family or even strangers. Or maybe it was a holy moment when you felt God's presence. A time when you thought you were alone, but God was holding you close.

There are holy moments that happen when we least expect them. Just as we witness this holy moment at the cross today, we know that Jesus meets us in times of suffering and fear and death. And so we also remember today those holy times when Jesus revealed to us a person in need, a person we needed to see, a person God called us to remember.

In the days ahead I hope you look for and are open to the holiness of Jesus' reign and of his kingdom. Holy moments and experiences of remembering that God is with you. Holy moments and opportunities for you to share God's love and presence, remembering those who think they have been forgotten.

The Psalm appointed for this Christ the King weekend is not from the book of Psalms. It comes from Luke 1:68-79. After the birth of his son, John the Baptist, Zechariah spoke a prophecy that also helps us remember God's promises for us today.

*<sup>68</sup>“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. <sup>69</sup>He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, <sup>70</sup>as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, <sup>71</sup>that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. <sup>72</sup>Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, <sup>73</sup>the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us <sup>74</sup>that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup>in holiness and righteousness before him all our days... <sup>78</sup>By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, <sup>79</sup>to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Songwriters: Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert J. Lopez

<sup>ii</sup> Karoline Lewis, *Dear Working Preacher: A Holy Kingdom*, November 13, 2022