

Sunday November 23rd, 2025

Christ the King.

Proper 29:

Luke 23:33-43

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

Today is Christ the King's Sunday and I had to write a poem on this passage for my homiletics class . I want to share it with you all today since it took me forever to write it. So here it is: I typed it in bold

Poem for Christ the King, my King! ❤️

Ridiculed then crucified

They believed that You just died

While they were nothing but mean

You became the One true King

Sometimes I tell my soul

To trust You're in control

My fire for You is like a flame

Too wild, too strong to keep in chains

I love You Lord for Your sacrifice

I know if You had to, You would do it twice

I'm grateful for your kindness

And will show it through my loudness

Until the day when death

Will greet my last breath

For what You did on the cross

Was humble yet You're the boss!

Focus: The power of forgiveness

Sermon Title: "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do."

These words the words of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Crucifixion was reserved for acts against the state. The reason why religious authorities along with Roman authorities wanted to crucify Jesus was because He called Himself the son of God and therefore "King of the Jews" which was an act against the state. They couldn't believe that Jesus could possibly be the son of God. Yes, they knew about His miracles but couldn't understand how such a humble man like Him could be the Messiah. They didn't understand that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. Jesus unveiled what the Kingdom of God truly looks like. Forgiveness became a tool of choice rather than violence. Even in His final moments of agony, He was saving souls. One of the criminals next to Him recognized the spiritual

validity to the charge under which Jesus was being executed, and his request to Jesus was that Jesus think of him in the future referring to the end of time on the Day of the Lord when Jesus will be in His glory. Jesus's reply was that "today you will be in the kingdom of heaven".

Jesus also showed us an example of enemy love. While in excruciating pain, Christ thought of humanity. This is the true definition of compassion. Let's take a minute and imagine how humiliating it must have been for Him to be placed between two criminals to begin with. Stripped away from his clothes and His dignity. The rulers were cruelly mocking Him "He saved others, let Him save Himself" then the Roman soldiers shouted Him. "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself". At this point, Jesus had been beaten and hung on the cross. He was ridiculed, yet there He was, interceding in humanity's behalf asking God to forgive the very people who nailed Him to the cross.

The imagery that comes to mind when reading this passage is a vivid one that portrays deep suffering. Jesus offered grace to those who tortured Him and withheld judgement. This passage challenges us to question our relationship with others and to live out our forgiveness not only in thanksgiving to Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us but in forgiving our neighbors. Here comes the million-dollar question; what is forgiveness? Or better yet let's start with what forgiveness is not. Forgiveness doesn't mean excusing people from their bad behavior towards you.

Forgiveness isn't ignoring someone who has hurt one of our loved ones just to be polite towards that person. Forgiveness deals with sin and not forgiving is a sin. It doesn't mean that forgiveness denies justice. Forgiveness means trusting in God's justice while offering mercy just like Jesus did. One thing we can do is pray for God to work in the hearts of those who hurt

others so they would repent and know His love. This embodies Jesus' command: "Pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44) teaches us to love our enemies by refusing to pay evil with evil. So, forgiveness comes before reconciliation. It's like a pre-requisite. Once we let go of the wrong that has been done to us, our hearts and minds are open to love and acceptance again. Jesus taught us a huge lesson there; He forgave His enemies on the cross before reconciling us to God through His death.

I have another million-dollar question for all of you; how can we be so quick in asking God for forgiveness while we refuse to forgive one another? Let's just sit with that for a second. If you allow me to be transparent, I will say that I wrestled with this passage at home because what the spirit does is flash names and faces across your mind when you think of forgiveness. A coworker who lied on us to look like a better fit for the job or to get a promotion. A friend who borrowed money but never returned the full amount which you needed, a family member who has done something wrong to you. All of a sudden, there is a feeling of disgust as if we've never made mistakes ourselves. Our human nature wants us to "teach people a lesson" or make things worse for them than they made it for us. Satan wants us to see revenge as a way of getting back to those who have wronged us but Jesus taught us otherwise. To receive a blow and to not pass it on is an act of extraordinary generosity. For most of us, it takes practice and maturity. We're usually too angry to be able to absorb the effect of an injury before we pass it on to a neighbor. Yes, forgiving people might be one of the hardest things we might have to do in life, but we must because it's God's will. We must become loving people.

I have been the recipient of people's generosity from the moment I landed in the United States to later find out that those helpers were people who have always been kind to ungrateful folks. To see how they're able to look that over helps me in doing the same in my own life. Doing things for God's glory. You see, we come to church often, and coming to church means coming to the cross. Coming to the cross is where we ask and receive forgiveness and also where we should learn to forgive. We can forgive because we have Christ within us. Jesus taught us a lesson on that cross. One we should never forget. Also, part of that forgiveness is forgiving ourselves. So, let's take off that garment of shame we've been carrying around! Let go and let God! Romans 5: 8 tells us "While we're sinners, Christ died for us" proving to us that our struggles with sin doesn't disqualify us for the love of God.

When all the moms at the seminary get together, we often bring up issues our children are facing and one of them is forgiveness. When the kids get angry because of something another child did, we validate those feelings then show them how to make peace with that specific child and within a few minutes the kids are playing together again. This makes me ask myself "What can't we all be like this?" No more grudges! Make peace and trust that God will handle it. Ephesians 4: 32 tells us "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave you". We cannot let our wounds have the last words, but what we can do is let healing take place. Our duty in forgiving each other is grounded in Calvary. What Jesus did on the cross shows us what we must do as Christians.

Conclusion: My brothers and sisters in Christ, love and forgiveness are the special vocations of Christian life and when we exercise them, we heal our own wounds and offer balm to the healing of others. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the

old has gone, the new has come!". As we prepare ourselves during this Advent season, may we remember Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us. May we continue to honor the King of Kings who rules over all things, and may forgiveness be proof that we are new creatures in Christ and that the Holy Spirit lives within us. Amen!