

LAST SUNDAY OF END TIME
(CHRIST THE KING)

Luke 23:35-43

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

Imagine if someone spat on the President. Imagine if someone beat him and mocked him and treated him like *a worm and not a man* (Psalm 22:6). Imagine. There would be outrage. We’d all be waiving our flags and flexing our collective muscle and throwing a general fit. Toby Keith would write a song about it. It would be on the cable news networks non-stop, and it would be the focus of conversation in break-rooms, classrooms, and radio shows across the nation. No one treats our President that way.

Today is Christ the King Sunday, and so we focus our attention on the Holy Gospel to see the grand welcome our world gave its visiting King. Its quite a welcome, isn’t it? Do you know there are three different Greek words for mocking in our text? Our Lord was mocked in such a way that three different words are required to describe it. More kindness was shown to two justly condemned criminals than to Christ the King. They got painkiller; Christ sour wine. They are ignored; Christ is mocked. Their sins are left unspoken; Christ’s words are thrown in his face like dung. Such mistreatment would draw lawsuits today and even the staunchest proponents of the death penalty would be embarrassed, yet this was how our condemned God was treated. Long live the King! No. Die you King, who claims to take away our sins!

Weren’t they horrible back then? If only we were there. “Were you there when they crucified my Lord. Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.” Yes, you were there. You were there, because you are what held Him to His cross; you and all your filthy sins. Who could be so arrogant or thoughtless as to think that if they’d been there things would have been different? You wouldn’t have stopped anything. You would have been one of them. You would have spat, ridiculed, nailed, and laughed. You would have yelled, “Go. Suffer. Die,” because otherwise you would burn in hell forever, because only His going, suffering, and dying could take away your sin. Only one who denies the reality of sin could deny the necessity of this event. Here we sin displayed in all its ugliness, and not just sin in general, but our sin.

And you still spit, ridicule, nail, and laugh, because knowing His Word, knowing your King, you often without even a pang of conscience throw His Word back in His face and refuse to submit to His rule by putting faith into action. You know the commandments, yet you break them. You know what Christ has done for you, yet you are ashamed to confess Him in public and maybe even to your family. Your King says through St. Paul, *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”* How often do we even look for the way out? How often do we wait even a while for it to be provided? How often don’t we instead simply wave the white flag before there’s even a battle and plunge into the very same sin we just the day before swore to abandon forever?

You are the people watching, the rulers scoffing, the soldiers abusing, and the criminals ridiculing. When you come and kneel up here today before His Body and His

Blood, given and shed for you, look up at the cross, and know that when you look at Him, you look at Him like any of those men and women who hurled bodily fluid and slander at Him, and He looks down, Christ the King, mistreated and rejected at your very hands; and He would have it no other way.

Christ was not confused about what was going to happen when He came as King to His subjects. He sweated drops like blood in Gethsemane, and yet He knew and accepted it all. In fact, in the verse before our text He prays: *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”* He prayed for the very people who tortured Him. He loved the very people who hated Him so much. He forgave the greatest regicide in the history of mankind.

Christ is our King. He was the King of every man, woman, and child that humiliated Him that day. He could have stopped this injustice at any time, yet He let them abuse Him, because they abused Him for their own good, even though they did not know it. *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed”* (Isaiah 53:5). *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’”* (Galatians 3:13). *“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

What a King is our Christ! While most kings are crowned with great pomp and spectacle, this King is crowned with thorns by bloodthirsty pagans. While most kings’ subjects bow to them, our King bowed His head to them in death upon a cross. Who would not want such a king, who deigns to serve the very people from whom He could demand at least a superficial and labored service?

One man wanted such a king. In just two sentences, this man confessed both his sins and his faith in the presence of His King, who looked anything but regal. *“We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”* He begged for this King’s favor, knowing He had absolutely nothing to offer Him. *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* And the King, who is also the Christ, answered with an absolution, *“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Today, when you come up to receive your King’s Body and Blood, offered for you on that accursed tree, do as I said, and look at that cross as all those gathered around Christ did that day. Look at Him and know you are His mocker, His torturer, and His betrayer. But then look from a different angle. Look through the eyes of a condemned sinner whose last chance is quickly passing. See the merciful eyes of the naked and bloody King so unjustly condemned. Confess like that thief who had no more use for pretense and pride. Plead with Him, like the thief, as one who knows who He is. He is Christ the King. Let your very approaching Him at His altar cry out: *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* And as His Body and Blood are placed on your tongue and poured down your throat, taste and hear His absolution, His answer: *“I tell you the truth, you will be with me in paradise.”* Grab on to this promise and never let it go. Lock it in your ears; trap it on your taste buds, for that sweet taste of forgiveness works undying allegiance to this Christ, your King, and tells the world the sign is true: *“This is the King of the Jews.”* Amen.