Christ The King.

Text: Luke 23:35-43
Suggested Hymns:
115, 487, 206, 283, 297

1) Jesus Christ Is King,
   But Not According To The World's Definition
2) Jesus Christ Is King,
   As Scripture Presents Him
3) Jesus Wants To Be King In Our Lives

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 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)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We operate on various kinds of calendars. We hear of financial calendars and financial years. We have our daily calendar that begins with January 1 and ends with December 31. We also have a church calendar. According to this calendar today is the last Sunday of the church year.

This Sunday reminds us that Christ is King. We heard these verses in the Introit, Revelation 1:8, ***8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."***

And Psalm 24:7, [7] ***Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.***

The Scripture readings remind us to watch ***for we know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.***[1]

We are also reminded that we are but pilgrims on earth and that we are merely passing through. Our text reminds us that Jesus Christ wants to rule and reign in our hearts and lives as King. Christ the King promises a portion in His eternal Kingdom to those who believe His Word and promises and accept and serve Him as King.

Our theme for today is *Christ the King*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Christ Is King, But Not According To The World's Definition

"***THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.***" This sign above the head of Jesus on the cross meant many things to different people. Jesus was not a king according to the world's definition and model. Some people expected a show of power. Some waited for pageantry and parades. Others wanted a king who would provide food and entertainment.

"The people stood looking on." *"Is this man on the cross really a king? If He is, He is different. He is not like other kings. Would a king permit himself to be mocked, nailed to a cross, and put to death in the company of criminals? What kind of king is He?"*

"***But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."*** The rulers, the Jewish officials, were aware of Jesus' teachings and His ministry to the people.

The Jewish officials knew that Jesus had performed many miracles. He had healed the lame, the deaf, and the blind. Jesus had raised the dead. *"If this man on the cross is the Messiah, the Promised Saviour, let Him show His identity by a show of power. Let Him save Himself."*

But that is not why Jesus came. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was showing His power on the cross. He was showing the power of God's love. The fulfilment of God's plan of salvation kept Jesus Christ on the cross. The rulers did not believe. They did not understand.

"***The soldiers also mocked Him.***" The soldiers probably had never seen Jesus before that day. They had read the sign above the head of Jesus. They had heard the taunts of the Jewish officials. They joined in the chorus, ***"If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself."*** *"What kind of king is He?"*

One of the criminals who had been crucified with Jesus joined in the mockery. ***"If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."*** Like others around the cross, this dying criminal did not recognise Jesus as the Messiah-King on Jesus' terms. He rejected the lordship and the kingship of Jesus Christ. He, too, asked the question within himself, *"What kind of king is He?"*

2. Jesus Christ Is King, As Scripture Presents Him

The New Testament clearly indicates what kind of king Jesus was and is. He is a lowly king. He rode into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday surrounded — not by soldiers, trumpeters, and banners — but by children and pilgrims who were coming to Jerusalem to observe the Passover.

The crowds chanted, ***"Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!"***[2]

Jesus Christ came to be a suffering king. He came to die for His people. We read in Mark 10:45, ***the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*** And in John 10:14, 15, ***"I am the good shepherd; … and I lay down my life for the sheep."***

Jesus Christ, who as God, created the universe, did not come to establish an earthly kingdom. He did not intend to set up a world empire with headquarters in Jerusalem, Alexandria, or Rome.

On the day of His crucifixion Jesus told Pontius Pilate, ***"My kingdom is not of this world."***[3] Christ's kingdom was not to be built on the might of armies, or on any form of earthly power.

Christ's kingdom was in fulfilment of God's promises. His kingdom was built on God's wisdom, God's justice, God's love, and God's power over sin and death. Christ's kingdom was and is a spiritual kingdom.

While others that day may have understood what kind of king Jesus was, our text mentions one specific person who did understand and did believe.

One of the thieves dying on a cross next to Jesus had been led by the Spirit of God to see his own true state and plight before God. We hear the criminal's confession of sin as he witnesses to the other dying thief, ***"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."***

The Holy Spirit also enabled the penitent thief to reach out to Jesus for pardon and for spiritual and eternal life. We hear his confession of faith as he says, ***"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."*** He did not understand the full implications of his question or the kind of king that Jesus was. But in faith he reached out to Jesus for an answer to his deepest need.

He was ready and willing to be received by Jesus on Jesus' own terms. The penitent thief commended himself into the hands of Jesus Christ. He was ready to serve Jesus as king in life, in death, and in the life to come.

3. Jesus Wants To Be King In Our Lives

Jesus came to be ***"the King of the Jews,"*** but He also came to rule and to reign in the hearts of all people. He invites us to life and to service now and as long as we live on earth. He promises that those who live and believe in Him here on earth will live with Him in His kingdom forever.[4]

The world would have us ask for the spectacular, a show of earthly power and might, pomp and pageantry. Many times during the course of each day we are tempted to accept the world's substitutes for Jesus Christ.

The world places a premium on wealth, power, fame, prestige, recognition, and education. The world tempts us to say to Jesus, *"Prove that you are a king!"*

We are tempted to say, *"Lord I will serve you if, … if you give me wealth; if you give me health; if you give me social status and security; if you make me famous."*

Jesus our Lord has given us His holy Word. He has given us His Word of promise. He works through such simple things as the water and the Word in Holy Baptism; the bread, the wine, and the Word in Holy Communion; the printed page, the spoken word, the illustrated word, and the Word itself.

Jesus Christ calls us to daily repentance. That is, He wants us to recognise and acknowledge before the heavenly Father that we are sinners and in daily need of God's grace, patience, and forgiveness.

Our King calls us to daily renewal of our trust in Him. Trust includes faith in Him as our only Saviour, confidence that He is in control of our lives, and a joyful willingness to follow Him on His terms.

He invites us to listen to His voice in His Holy Scriptures. Daily He wants to remind us what kind of king He came to be. He came to live, to suffer, to die, and to rise again that we might have pardon, hope, peace, and eternal life.

Through His Word our King reminds us that we are His already now. We have entered upon eternal life.[5] We have a part in His kingdom right now.

As Christians, who are still in the world, we are members of Christ's Church Militant. We long for the full experience in His Church Triumphant.

We have the assurance from the lips of Christ our King written in John 14:2–3, ***[2] In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.***

In other words, *"When I return for you, that day you will be with me in Paradise."*

As Christians who know, acknowledge, and accept Jesus Christ as Lord, we have work to do for our King while we are here on earth. Just as the dying thief openly confessed Jesus as his King before the crowd gathered around the crosses, so we are to confess our faith in Christ as King before people who are still dying in their sins.

We are to confess our faith in Christ as our King not only by the words that we speak about Him, but also by what we "say" about Him in our daily lives. The words we speak about our relationship to Jesus Christ as our King are to be reinforced by our actions before others. Jesus Christ has called us to be royal heirs with Him in His kingdom.

As the King's people we are to be like Him in humility, forgiveness, patience, and love. Our Lord, who deserves the praise and worship of all His

creation, humbled Himself and came to earth to work out our salvation. He desires that we realise and remember the price He paid to save us from our sins.

Our Redeemer, who forgave us a debt that we could never repay, urges us as forgiven sinners to forgive one another. Parents are to forgive their children; children are to forgive their parents. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, members of Christian congregations are to forgive one another. How often? More than seventy times seven![6]

As our gracious Saviour deals with us patiently each and every day, so we Christians are to be long on patience, and short on griping, grumbling, and complaining about those whom God has placed around us in the home, at work, at school, in the church, and during our times of relaxation and refreshment.

Our Master's love for us cost Him His life. As heirs of salvation we are to love our fellowmen. Paul summarises these thoughts in Colossians 3:12–14, ***[12] Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; [13] bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. [14] But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.***

Further in the same chapter Paul writes, ***[18] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. [19] Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. [20] Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. [21] Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.***[7]

Before His crucifixion Jesus indicated to His disciples what their attitude, actions, and life-style should be.

Jesus said in Mark 10:43–44, ***whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. [44] And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.***

Jesus also said to them in Mark 8:34–37, ***"Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. [35] For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. [36] For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole***

world, and loses his own soul? [37] Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

The same words of Jesus apply also to us in our roles as His royal subjects, servants, and slaves.

Today we have come to the end of another church year. In our worship and in our sermon the spotlight has been focused on Christ the King.

The end of the church year and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross remind us of the end of our lives and our own physical death. Christ's death on the cross and His rising from the dead provide us with the basis for confidence and hope.

The Christ of Calvary and of Joseph's Garden, who has triumphed over sin and death, wants to reign in our hearts and live as King. He invites us to trust Him, to love Him, and to serve Him.

May the Holy Spirit lead each of us daily to acknowledge, confess, and serve Him as King on His terms. May the Holy Spirit grant us the necessary confidence, joy, and spiritual power as we await the fulfilment of our King's words of promise, ***"… you will be with me in Paradise."*** In the name of Christ the King! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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[1] Matthew 25:13
[2] Matthew 21:9
[3] John 18:36
[4] John 11:25, 26; John 14:1-3
[5] 1 John 5:11,1
[6] Mathew 18:22
[7] Colossians 3:18–21