

Christ the King Sunday – 2022
(Last Sunday of the Church Year)
Malachi 3:13-18
Colossians 1:13-20
Luke 23:27-43

How many of y'all ever have a bad day; a wave of inferiority ripping your soul, a radical loss of hope or a searing sense of aloneness wreaking havoc with your heart? Humans are emotional creatures and Christians are subject to the same pendulum swinging one way one day and another, entirely unexpected way, the next. Sometimes it comes out of left field. Sometimes we can tether it to something we've suffered or some sin we have committed or, if you have an active empathy, to a difficulty someone you love is enduring. In my very worst moments, I go to one of two places. First, there are others who have endured far more difficulty than I have. To me, that is inspiring. In the midst of great pain, I instinctively reached out to those who I knew had persevered horrible hardship. God has so clearly comforted them in their affliction and they, when I was in a bad way, extended that comfort to me (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). Their faith was a light for the house of my soul.

Secondly, I remind myself that this is all going to be over. It won't end with a whimper. When it ends it won't simply be like crossing the finish line, anticlimactic, going back to sitting on the bench. When Christ returns every believer's head will explode with joy. Weeping tears of elation while laughing at the same time, having your heart burn uncontrollably with the glory of God – that's coming. To have every ounce of divine love that you have known erupt in your soul as the crucified King returns in triumph to claim His bride – that's coming. Your eyes will delight to see the pierced Messiah and your ears will thrill to the pleasant voice of Creation's Lord calling your name. Your friends who have preceded you in death will be in view. You will be clothed in majesty, a new body, sinless, perfect, immortal. Your faith, your magnificent faith, your divinely inspired faith, will shine like the noonday sun (Psalm 37:6). The crazy thing about all that is that it won't exactly be new. The crazy thing about it is that what will be revealed is everything that has already happened, what is happening now.

It's the Gospel itself that will be thoroughly revealed – the truthfulness of the Word, the historicity of who Jesus of Nazareth is and what He has done. True God and true Man; He walked this earth, was crucified on a cross and rose again. When He comes again it will all be revealed for exactly what it is – the astounding love of God, sacrificing Himself for sinners. His Kingdom is among us. That too will be revealed. But let's get back to your bad day. Today itself is a remedy for anybody's bad day; Christ the King Sunday.

“And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left” (Luke 23:33). It wasn't unexpected. Jesus knew that it was coming. Hold onto that. Earlier, Jesus was miserable. He knew the gravity of what was staring Him in the face, and He said this: “Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27-28a). The Lord Christ knew why He'd come. He knew what He was called to do and why He was called to do it. What does He say to His Father? What does “Father, glorify your name” mean? It means “crucify Me.”

It's you. Jesus dies for you. Jesus begs His Father to crucify Him so that you might be saved. That is the truth. That is the beauty that is going to be revealed on the Last Day. His love, His majesty, His remarkable sacrifice, His authority over evil, His astounding holiness, His fierce determination to make His love determinative for humanity. That's what is going to be revealed on the Last Day. His Kingdom was inaugurated as He hung nailed to a cross, between two criminals, and His blood flowed from His holy flesh. His kingdom was unleashed as soldiers mocked Him, spit on Him, and scourged Him mercilessly. That's what is going to be revealed on the Last Day. The penitent thief saw that kingdom. In faith, with the eyes of his heart illuminated by Divine Love (Ephesians 1:18), that thief begged for what we all beg for: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). That thief was having a bad day; a day unlike any that you have endured. And the Messiah was there; dying with him; dying for him. "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

This is all going to be over and *that* is our end; hallelujah, *that* is our end. Christ the King Sunday ought to have one phrase ringing in your ear: "Father, glorify your name" (John 12:28a). Your salvation glorifies His name. To our heavenly Father, you are beautiful and innocent and precious and treasured. You are genuinely all this because Christ is our living King and all of His righteousness is credited to you. Jesus is the King of kings and He reigns from the tree. He is most regal as His flesh is torn, as He is crowned with hate and scorn, as He is clothed in our shame and our sin and our death. That is the King who saves you. That is your comfort on the worst of days. That is light in the darkness and hope in the morass of depression. You have received it. You are called to give it. Comfort, comfort my people (Isaiah 40:1). God whispers that in your ear. Do you think that this world is in need of comfort? Do you have a commodity in the treasury of your heart to dispense to those who are subject to this world's ravenous futility, its militant ignorance, its continual injustice? "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-2).

I received a gospel reminder from one of our dear ladies yesterday. It was sweet, simple, true, and powerful. The text message said this: "I have given God a million reasons not to love me. None of them changed His mind." That statement grasps the ramification of Christ's death and His ongoing devotion to you. The ramification of Christ's death is not just in your mind like a geometric theorem. Jesus' death and resurrection is in your being as a living reality. It is, therefore, incongruent to who you are as a Christian not to forgive those who sin against you. It is incongruent to who you are as a Christian not to be a peacemaker. It is incongruent to who you are as a Christian not to defend the truth, not to defend life, not to defend the holiness God has placed in you. And yet what do we do? "...the evil I do not want is what I keep doing" (Romans 7:19). I can put those words from St. Paul in everyone's mouth, starting with my own. You, like me, need the forgiveness that is anchored to the cross and found in Christ's body and blood.

Stay close; stay close to Christ and His Word. We weep for our sin and we stay close to this pulpit and this altar. Being a Christian means hearing His Word preached and it means receiving His body and blood. "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). He is here as the crucified and risen King. He is here to serve you.

Mighty God serves you. That is what we treasure – His service, His love, His forgiveness, His grace. Because the Lord Christ is among us with His gifts joy is in this holy house. We are in the Master's presence and He embraces us without reservation. Bad days will still happen. This world is broken. We are broken. But He comforts us with His blessed assurance – I have prepared a place for you (John 14:3). He comforts us with His presence – I am with you as One who serves (Luke 22:27). He comforts us with the Gospel – someday, some blessed day, you will be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Today that comfort is all around you. Blessed be Christ the King. Blessed be the saints of Christ the King.