

Christ the King Sunday – 2025
Malachi 3:13-18
Colossians 1:13-20
Luke 23:27-43

There is a haunting line in the first chapter of the book of Revelation that captures this day. St. John wrote what he saw, the vision that God had given him, “the things that must soon take place” (Revelation 1:1). Speaking of our Lord’s return, John wrote this: “Behold, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him” (Revelation 1:7). One of our outstanding hymns has this stanza: “Ev’ry eye shall now behold Him Robed in glorious majesty; Those who set at naught and sold Him, Pierced and nailed Him to the tree, Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing, Shall their true Messiah see (Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending ~ LSB #336).

People talk about the existence of a different dimension. Do you go for that? Are there things that believers see that unbelievers don’t? Christians walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). The eyes of our hearts have been enlightened, that’s what the Scripture says (Ephesians 1:18). In His wisdom, God chose to reveal Himself in ways that sinful man doesn’t expect and can’t comprehend (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). The Almighty hides His glory in shame in order that faith might find it and the eyes of carnal man won’t. I don’t believe in a different dimension. I believe in a spiritual reality that God has created, a reality that is built on His Son, built on a bloody cross, built on an empty tomb, a reality that is all around us. In Him, in Jesus, all the fulness of the deity dwelled bodily (Colossians 1:19). And when one looked at Him, when one looked at the eternal Son of God who became fully man, one couldn’t tell that He was the Word made flesh. Faith opens our eyes. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth to show us what is otherwise hidden. Not on the Last Day. We walk by faith *now*. When the Lord Christ returns all of that will be over.

When our Lord returns, unmistakable awareness will strike every eye, every heart, every mind. He will return in great power. When the Son of God returns all will know Him precisely as He is. The Lord Christ, true God and true Man, is the one through whom all things were made (John 1:3). Every human will know that this is God’s Son, humanity’s redeemer. Every son of Adam and every daughter of Eve will perceive His glory, will apprehend that His sacrifice is laden with love, with grace, that His truth is *the* truth and there is no other. Unbelief won’t have the opportunity to change to faith on that Day. Unbelief will cower; unbelief will experience great dread; unbelief will experience a crushing sense of self-inflicted loss.

As a congregation, we’ve been reading the Scriptures – a few chapters a day. The goal is to read the Bible in one year. Presently, we are in the book of Joshua having completed the Pentateuch about a week ago. It’s been a lively pilgrimage so far. One of the main lessons, something that occurs over and over, is that there is a huge price to pay for those who defy the Lord. What is shocking is how often it happens in the scriptural narrative. We’re all sinners. But there are those who actively profane God’s name and believe that they act with impunity. Wolves in Christian clothing actively lead the vulnerable astray by doing violence to God’s Word. Cultural icons actively sell the young and impressionable on hedonism. The most rancid type of books make their way into our public-school libraries by ideological predators – grooming those who

are poorly supervised with perversion. When the Lord comes on the Last Day, there will be a huge price to pay for those who defy Him.

What a blessing it is to know Him now! Does your heart not want to know Him better and better? A true King, regal and majestic, He reveals Himself to you, draws you to Himself, shelters you with His grace. He wants you to know Him know precisely as He is – a humble King, crucified yet reigning, mocked yet triumphant, enduring the punishment that our sins deserve because His love compels Him to pay the price that you could never pay. Christ the King – God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. You know Him. You know that He spent His life to save yours. You know that He spent His blood like liquid currency to ensure your release from sin and death. When He returns, the marks in His hands will be your comfort, your assurance of His claim on you. When He returns, your heart will leap toward Him. Why? Because everything you believe will be proved a factual reality. Your Spirit-born faith will leap toward Him because you will know that you belong to Him and that there is nothing greater than belonging to Him. Hope will soar in your mind as hope becomes concrete, the realest of real truths – your Christian faith.

Paradoxically, that day, a day in the future, a day that God has planned but a day that you have not known yet, that day is to inform how you live now. Firstly, we are to repent. There are two thieves. Which one are you? There are two thieves and everyone is one or the other, for we are all thieves. You and I have stolen our neighbor's good name by gossip. We are thieves. You and I have stolen God's glory by living selfishly. We are thieves. You and I have stolen the innocence of the vulnerable by publicly indulging our sinful nature. We are thieves. One thief, the repentant thief, knows that he is getting what he deserves. This prince of thieves also knows that Jesus is innocent, that He possesses a kingdom beyond this earth, and his dying prayer is to be sheltered in that kingdom. The other thief, the man who is dying in his felonious unbelief, condemns himself, curses himself, and dies to himself. Which one are you? We repent of our sins. We are repentant thieves.

This is a trustworthy saying, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief (1 Timothy 1:15). The crucifixion was for you. Believe it. The beautiful narrative of our Lord's suffering and death is a window into grace and that grace is for you. Believe it. Live like you believe it. That is how you show yourself to be Jesus' disciple – in showing grace to others, in defending the truth without concern for how you may suffer for it. You are Christ's disciple. You are a member of His holy kingdom. The Last Day will prove it unequivocally, but it is true now and others are to know it now. Behave honestly, speak honestly, put your regard for honesty out in the open and let others know why you value it – because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and you are His disciple. His kingdom is here, His presence is here, His forgiveness is here – put your regard for Him out in the open and let others know that you value this Divine Service because He is one who has established it and you must be where He is. Trust Him; rely on His strength; yearn for His goodness; prepare for His return.

The world will continue to be the world – blind, self-interested, corrupt. Defiance of God will continue. But this world, this life has so much that has been built by God for our good. Love, forgiveness, a participation in the holy, music and art and beauty and family and camaraderie and humor and sacrifice and tenderness – those realities will endure. When our Lord returns the real

will shine and the vapid will fade like a morning mist. In this place, you participate in what is real. Enjoy it. Savor it. Thank God for it. What is real? Christ's body and blood is real, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins. Christ the King Himself gives it to you. Eat and drink it and as you do remember that at some point you will eat and drink it with Him in Paradise (Matthew 26:26-29).