

Christ the King

*Sunday between 20 and 26 November ·
Last Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Principal Service readings

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Jeremiah 23.1-6 | Prophecy of a future wise and just king |
| Psalms 46 | God is with us, our refuge and strength |
| Colossians 1.11-20 | Christ, the head of creation |
| Luke 23.33-43 | The crucifixion; 'today you will be with me in paradise' |

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The Crucifixion

³³When 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. ³⁴Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.' ³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' ⁴²Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' ⁴³Jesus replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Luke 23.33-43 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

The feast of Christ the King celebrates the glory of the ascended Christ. However, today's gospel reading focuses on the taunted and crucified Christ. Perhaps the two go together. Our reading of the crucifixion is certainly very different if we truly see Christ as king. We can see the denigrating and harsh treatment of Jesus by people who don't know who he really is. As he hangs helplessly on the cross people become emboldened to criticise, dismiss and condemn.

The reader knows that Jesus will not use his power to save himself. But what he does do is promise salvation to a criminal hanging with him. Think of the ways in which this situation is full of dramatic irony.

Jesus makes a promise but when will it be fulfilled? Jesus doesn't use the word 'kingdom' but the word 'paradise'. This is the word used in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) to describe the garden of Eden, the garden in which God placed Adam and Eve. As Jesus says this word Luke is showing that Jesus' death reverses the effect of the sin that was begun by the first Adam.

Quotations

1

But the Wisdom of God, which is his only-begotten Son, being in all respects incapable of change or alteration, and every good quality in him being essential, and such as cannot be changed and converted, his glory is therefore declared to be pure and sincere.

Origen, c.185 – c.253

2

People love to quote that Jesus is love, yet they neglect to mention that he's also King. If you love the King, you will obey him.

Alisa Hope Wagner

3

The gospels were all about God becoming king, but the creeds are focused on Jesus being God.

N. T. Wright, 1948–

2

Related topics

For further study:

Jesus Christ, King of the Universe; kingdom of God; eschatology; soteriology

Closing Prayer

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
you gave us your Son, the beloved one who was rejected,
the Saviour who appeared defeated.

Yet the mystery of his kingship illumines our lives.
Show us in his death
the victory that crowns the ages,
and in his broken body
the love that unites heaven and earth.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Christ the King²

CPL • LBC Year C Christ the King.odt • 2022-10-03

2 *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*