

May we each, in our hearing of the Gospel, find the love of Christ, through the life of Christ and carry that love out into this broken world.

So, here we are. Its In-Gathering Sunday, just a few days until Thanksgiving, and a week before the beginning of Advent. All wonderful things to look forward to.

And then, there is today's Gospel where we find Christ dying on the cross while being mocked by the crowds and having a conversation with the two criminals being executed next to him. I don't know about you but, when I first looked at the Gospel for today my initial impression was; who decided to put this Gospel in the lectionary on this day. I know, today is Christ The King Sunday but at first glance, this doesn't seem to reflect the Kingdom of Christ. However, there is more to the story than our first glance.

As most of you may, or perhaps may not know, our readings and gospel each week are based on a three-year cycle; years A, B and C. Christ the King Sunday is the last Sunday before the beginning of Advent in each of those years. The three-year cycle for the lectionary is meant to provide a comprehensive and balanced reading of the Bible over that three-year period. This approach allows for a more thorough engagement with the Scriptures and helps ensure that all aspects of the bible are covered in a structured and meaningful way to help congregations and individuals reflect on the teachings and messages of the bible and also to foster a deeper understanding of our faith and spirituality.

To get a little bit more context into why we have today's gospel at the end of this three-year cycle we need to go back a bit and see what happened on this day years A and B.

In Year A the gospel is from Matthew, chapter 25 verses 31-36. Jesus is telling a story about the Sheep and the Goats but, the first words of that story are:

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne”. Further on in this gospel we hear these familiar words: For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick and looked after you or in prison and visited you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Jesus is looking into the future, to the coming of the son of man. He is giving us a foretaste of the kingdom that awaits...and did you catch that last part? “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine,”

Jesus is already making it clear that even though his glory and kingdom await; here, today, in this hour and always his brothers and sisters are the hungry and thirsty, the homeless and those who are sick and in prison. This is who Christ the King is.

In Year B on this Holy Sunday we hear the Gospel of John in chapter 18. Jesus is now in the hands of Pilate who is questioning Jesus and asks him; So, are you a king? Jesus responds, You say that I am a king. “For this I was born and, for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.

Everyone who belongs to the truth, listens to my voice” We again get a vision of what awaits both for Jesus and for us and for all who listen to his words and follow in his footsteps.

And now we arrive once more at our Gospel for today.

The very first lines are: When 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. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." He is asking His Father to forgive their ignorance, and their complete lack of understanding.

From there we move to the criminals on his right and left. One deriding Jesus and saying if you are the Messiah, save yourself and us. The other rebuked the first man, saying to him "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replies, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." Not tomorrow or in 3 days but, today.

Jesus has no need to forgive this person he hears his words and offers him love and peace. For Jesus, forgiveness is a given the same as a mother forgives a child.

Consider for a moment other interactions with Jesus in the various gospels.

In Luke chapter 7 a woman is weeping at the feet of Jesus wipes his feet with her hair and anoints him and the response from Jesus is: “your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

In Matthew Chapter 9 Jesus said to a paralytic, “Take heart son, your sins are forgiven.

In John, Chapter 8 we hear the story of a woman caught in adultery and brought to Jesus in front of the crowd waiting to stone her. Jesus responds:

“Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”

Her accusers all leave - then Jesus says to her; “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

She replies “No, Lord,” and Jesus responds, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

In none of these do we hear Jesus telling the person that they are forgiven, it is always their sins that are forgiven. His love for us is constant.

Everyone of us, everyone we know, everyone we meet and all those beyond our knowing were created by God to be exactly who they are. And all are loved equally. There is no sin in being the person God made you or anyone else to be. Each of us is and was created in the image of a loving God. That image is not about what we look like or where we came from or who we are called to love. It is all about how we love and how we share the love we have so freely been given.

For Jesus, and for us, sin is when we turn away from that light and love. When we choose to ignore those who are hungry and those who are thirsty (not just for water but for compassion and caring and a helping hand or a bit of kindness), those who are strangers in a foreign land, those who are sick or in prison and all who are in need of someone to offer them a bit of hope, or some vision of paradise.

Sin is also when we refuse to offer forgiveness. When we cling to our hurt or anger. When we do that, we only deprive ourselves the fullness of God's desire for us and the fullness of her love. We are called to forgive, as we have been forgiven. When we don't, we are not fully free to love others or ourselves.

SERMON FOR NOVEMBER 23rd, 2025 - Year C : Proper 29

Gospel: Luke 23:33-43

Forgiving doesn't mean you forget, just that you remember with compassion and when you do, you will find within yourself that part of paradise that sets you free.

And so it is fitting that on this Christ the King Sunday that we find that it is not about, death and bloodshed. It is however, all about unconditional love for all of Gods children, and her brothers and sisters, and for you and I and for the promise of the future that awaits in Christ.

Amen