

Christ the King Sunday  
*Jesus, Remember Me*  
Luke 22:33-43  
11/24/13

One day a pastor was visiting a Sunday school class of a 3 and 4 year-olds and he asked them, "Where is Jesus?"

As quick as a wink, a little girl answered him.  
She said, "He's up there," and pointed to the sky.  
Some of her classmates nodded in agreement.

Wanting to hear more, the pastor asked, "But where else is He?"  
At that point, a little boy looked up at him as if to say,  
"O come on, silly, you know" and he pointed to his heart.

Think about that for a moment.  
If someone asked you the same question, "Where is Jesus?" What would you say?

This morning we celebrate the last Sunday in the church year: Christ the King Sunday.  
As you may know, the church year follows the life of Christ.  
Each December, we start with Advent and prophecies about Christ coming again.  
We then move to Christ's birth and his years of ministry,  
we follow his walk to the cross, his death and resurrection,  
and then His ascension and his sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

So today on this last day of the church year, it's appropriate to ask:  
"Having heard the story of Christ, where is He now?"  
"What place do you give Him, in your life today?"

Today's Gospel is also one of our readings for Good Friday.  
Because it's on the cross that we see Jesus most clearly.  
Everything about Jesus points to the cross and Jesus' victory on the cross.

It's on the cross that Jesus is mocked by the unbelieving soldiers.  
It's on the cross that Pilate hung a sign meant to mock him with the sarcastic inscription  
reading, "This is the King of the Jews?"

The irony is that these words are true.  
This is the King of the Jews. Jesus is the King of all.

In today's Gospel, the conversation between the two thieves hanging next to Jesus is also revealing. Three important things happen in this exchange:

First, one of the thieves begins by taunting Jesus:  
"Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

But the second thief doesn't mock Jesus.  
 Instead, his words reveal for us, who Jesus really is.  
 He doesn't just say, "Remember me."  
 He says, "Remember me, when you come into your Kingdom"...when you become King.

The word, Messiah, means "King" or anointed One.  
 So he acknowledges and recognizes Jesus' Kingship.  
 That's the first thing that is revealed: Jesus is King.

The second important thing this conversation reveals  
 is that we all stand before God condemned by our sins.

The second thief shows us that Jesus is not only our King, He is also our Judge.  
 As it says in James 2, verse 10. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point, is guilty of breaking all of it."

That's what we confess every Sunday.  
 We confess that we have all sinned and stand before God in need of mercy.  
 But the story of the second thief on the cross doesn't end there.

The third important thing we learn is that by asking Jesus to remember him  
 this thief did something much more significant than we might think.

Because when we hear the word "remember" in the Bible it's a very important word.  
 Biblical writers understood remembering differently than we do.  
 Remembering was always viewed as an act of the community, not just one individual.  
 If a name was forgotten, the person ceased to exist for the whole community.

Also remembering was more than just a mental activity.  
 To remember God's law was not just to think about it, but to do it.

So when the criminal hanging next to Jesus begged, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" Jesus responded, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."  
 Here Jesus promised not just to think about the thief but to bring him into heaven."  
 In other words, Jesus came to save. He promised the thief a new resurrected life, in heaven.

Just like the promise we hear in the Book of Revelation,  
 "The old is gone, behold, the new has come."  
 God is making all things new: for that thief on the cross and for you and me.

Jesus is our King, and our Judge, but ultimately Jesus came to save.  
 Jesus came that we might have new life in Him.

The name Jesus literally means, God Saves.

Which brings me back to my original question:  
 Given that Jesus is our King, Judge, and Savior “where is Jesus today?”  
 In what ways do we recognize Jesus for who He is?

Do we recognize Him as our King and make Him the Lord in every area of our lives?

Do we come before Jesus in repentance, recognizing our sin,  
 and the judgment we would face, apart from His mercy?

Do we go through life trying to save ourselves, trying to take care of our own problems,  
 trying to be a good enough person and resting on our own goodness?  
 Or do we surrender to God’s grace?

You see, Christ the King Sunday, is ultimately about worship, surrendering our will to God.

In fact, “surrendering to God is the heart of worship.  
 It is the natural response to God’s amazing love and mercy.  
 We give ourselves to God, not out of fear or duty but in love.”<sup>1</sup>

And so on this Christ the King Sunday, I want to focus our attention  
 on what it means to love God, with our whole heart... what it means to see Jesus as your King,  
 Judge, and Savior and to respond to His love, with your whole life.

To ask “where is Jesus in your life today?” is to ask:  
 Who are you going to worship? Who are you going to live for?  
 What are you going to build your life around?

You can center your life around your career, your family, or many other activities.

“These are good things, but they don’t belong at the center of your life.  
 None is strong enough to hold you together when life starts breaking apart.  
 You need an unshakeable center. “How do you know when God is at the center? You  
 worship.”<sup>2</sup>

We gather for worship together each Sunday to worship Christ our King.  
 In worship we are renewed, and refreshed, and equipped  
 to go out into our community and worship God in all that we do.

My prayer for you today, is that the Holy Spirit speaks to you  
 and breathes life into you,  
 so that Christ our king rules in your hearts and your minds. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Warren *The Purpose Driven Life*

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

to the glory of our Father in Heaven. Amen