

Christ the King Sunday, Gospel Year C

CROSS PURPOSES

Luke 23:33-43

Christ the King Sunday

Analysis by Mark A. Marius

33 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. 34 [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. 35 And 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!" 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding Jesus and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."



DIAGNOSIS: Cross Examination

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Convicted to the Cross

We have been nailed. We find ourselves on the opposite side of the ruling power. We are being crucified for our criminal behavior. Our deeds have determined our fate. We were judged as not good enough to live.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Double-Crossed

What is even worse is that our only hope to return to the life we know is enthroned on a cross next to us. We've been double-crossed! How can we trust a king wearing a crown of thorns, suffering our same crucifixion? This is certainly not trustworthy. What a sham. We mock. We deride. We are skeptical. All is lost.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Crossed out

If God won't save the king, he certainly won't save us. Our kingdom is coming ... to an end ... forever. Amen.

PROGNOSIS: Thy Kingdom Comes

**Step
4:
Initial
Prognosis
(Eternal
Solution):
Remembered**



God remembers, and in Christ that is good news, because God remembers us in mercy—giving us the very thing law-breakers like us don't deserve: God's kingdom. This is where Christ, the king, reigns—in God's kingdom. Forever and ever. He doesn't die to save our corrupt, earthly kingdoms, but to open God's perfect kingdom to us. Christ's death destroys our dead-end lives, and his resurrection enters us into God's eternal life—today!

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Already Here

Today we are with our king, God's chosen one, in God's kingdom. Baptism does that for us and reminds us that there are no dastardly deeds that can keep us apart from Jesus. God has chosen us too. Dying daily to all the sinful kingdoms we are wont to build, Christ joins us to his kingdom. Communion fills us with everything we need for living a godly life. Our doubt and fear are met with faith, our derision is replaced by praise, our taunts are quieted by the testimony of truth.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Paradise

Jesus calls this kingdom Paradise. So that is exactly what it is. A place for new creations, new life, and where we can leave superficial stuff behind. And it's anything but private. It's built for community, for sharing, for me being with you. So we are not satisfied entering Paradise alone. Instead, we meet people at the cross, the place where all who only know life in the old kingdom gather. But rather than delivering judgment as a final word there, we share a Christ of love, grace, and acceptance. We proclaim a king whose paradoxical reign brings Paradise.