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## Sermon

### ***Jesus our Glorious King***

**Jeremiah 23:1-6; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43**

20<sup>th</sup> November 2022

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Today is the last Sunday before Advent. It is the end of the Church liturgical year and is called Christ the king Sunday. At the end of the cycle of readings for each year we focus on Christ as the glorious king.

Jeremiah prophesied in the last days before the fall of the Southern Kingdom. He referred to the rulers of his time as the shepherds of the people. They lacked wisdom, they lacked integrity; justice failed; the people suffered.

But in contrast to this, Jeremiah pointed to the hope of the coming one: a righteous ruler, a King from the line of David – in fact the Messiah. This King will reign wisely; he will do what is just and right. In his days Judah will be saved spiritually and Israel will dwell safely.

He will be called “the LORD, our Righteousness.” *LORD* is in capital letters. That is the way our Bibles show that it represents the personal name for God, *Yahweh*.

This is not any ordinary descendent of David, it is God himself who is our righteousness. You wouldn't declare God to be your righteousness if you were only saying that he is righteous and you are not and nothing has changed. Then you would say, “The Lord who is righteous.” No, this is the one who is the source of righteousness to us.

In the gospel reading, Jesus is acknowledged King by two people even as he is rejected and killed.

Pilate had asked if he were the King of Jews and declared him not deserving punishment. Yet he finally gave in to pressure and imposed the death sentence. The notice on the cross was the official reason for the sentence: “The King of the Jews”. Yet it served a proclamation which is why the Jewish leaders wanted it changed, to “This man claimed to be king of the Jews.”<sup>1</sup>

And there was another who understood that Jesus was King: the second criminal. He showed an understanding of a judgement to come - that life continues beyond death and there we must account for our lives. He acknowledged his guilt and he declared the righteousness of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> John 19:21

Then this man asked Jesus to remember him when he comes in his Kingdom. He showed enormous faith. He was dying; Jesus was dying. They knew that they would be dead by sundown and even under those conditions he asked Jesus, "Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

Recently, I was reading Psalm 106 and was struck by a verse. Could the criminal on the cross have been referring to it?

Psalm 106:4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favour to your people, come to my aid when you save them ...

It is the same meaning. He may have paraphrased this verse.

In those extreme circumstances he was confident that his dying neighbour would live again. In that most unpromising of situations, he believed the tortured Jesus would return as a King. As a convicted criminal he understood the offer of forgiveness and cried out for mercy. This thief is a hero of the faith!

And Jesus responded, "I tell you the truth: today you will be with me in paradise." <sup>2</sup>

The dying criminal was not wrong. He had understood correctly. He had placed his faith in the right person. He received salvation. Though he would die, he would not perish but be conscious with Jesus in a lovely place. There is the assurance of continuing existence. Do you have that assurance? Have you like the criminal, called out to Jesus and told him you trust that he is able to save you. Have you asked him to free you from the penalty of your sins? Have you asked him to be your king?

We need to do that individually. It is not an automatic transaction. We have to ask. The other criminal, the mocker, did not receive any assurance. It is like approaching North Shore Hospital car park. The barrier is down and you come up to the ticket machine. You put your arm out and push the big button and the ticket comes rattling out of the slot. No-one is forcing you to take the ticket. But if you want to get into the carpark, you must take the ticket. Listening to me talk about Jesus our righteousness is like pushing the button. But you have to take action – grab the ticket and the barrier will go up and you can drive straight through. To become righteous, you must believe that Jesus can deal with your sin and ask him to.

As we turn to the letter to the Colossians, Paul gives us the view behind the scenes. We are shown who this Jesus is who died in such circumstances and ... the outcome.

Who is Jesus? He is the creator; he is God. We often think of the Father as the creator but the Bible clearly states the Trinity, as a whole, acted to create the universe. Here we have an emphasis on the Son creating. If you are unsure about whether he is really God, it is there in our reading: "The Son is the image of the invisible God [v15]" and "All the fullness of God dwells in him. [v19]"

Everything that has been created was created by him: heavenly, earthly, visible, and invisible. As creator he existed before everything else and it is he who holds everything together.

What was he doing at the cross? Through the Son, Jesus, God the trinity reconciles all things to himself.

In Colossians 1:13-14, we read, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

God has rescued us, he has given us redemption. Redemption is a word from the slave market when someone paid to set a slave free. We could think of the ransom paid to set a kidnap victim free. It is a picture of what Christ has done for us on the cross.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 23:43

Paul writes of two rulers and two kingdoms. There is a kingdom of light and one of darkness. Christ is the ruler of the kingdom of light. When we put our trust in Jesus to save us, God takes us as refugees. We are taken out of a dangerous realm to a safe place – a refuge. But this is not a refugee camp, it is a far more glorious place than the miserable existence left behind.

We were in a place of darkness – now we have light – revelation, purity. What is the border between darkness and light, between death and life, between slavery and freedom? The border is labelled “forgiveness.” You cross the border when your sins are forgiven.

When we are forgiven we are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s son and we become inheritors of God’s riches with Christ. Have you asked him for forgiveness and trusted that he has saved you? Do you know you have been taken from the kingdom of darkness and become a citizen of the Kingdom of Light? In Christ that is your inheritance.

Our King is the creator. Our King is glorious. Our King has all supremacy over every other being, over every other name in creation. Our King is our saviour and our righteousness.

Is your understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ big enough? Do you need to ask him to save you? Do you need to ask him to forgive you? Maybe you also would like to pray, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”