



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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November 21, 2010

4th Sunday of Endtime: Christ the King

Sermon Text: [Luke 23:35-43](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 49:8-12](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 98](#)

Second Lesson: [Colossians 1:13-20](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 23:35-43](#)

Today You Will Be With Me in Paradise

The King's Promise
The Believer's Comfort

I'll make you two promises today. Tell me which one you'd be more inclined to believe. I promise I'll have you out of worship by noon today, and I promise that before the service is over today, I'll brake the 100 meter dash record. You are probably more inclined to believe one rather than the other, right? Experience has told you the first promise is going to be true. Your eyes tell you the second promise is an impossibility, right? We evaluate promises that way though, don't we? From our experience and what we can see.

Now, put yourself in the crowd outside the city walls of Jerusalem on a hill called Calvary. You look up and you see three crosses. On the one in the middle is a guy who has dried blood that has trickled down his face from a crown of thorns they had put on his head. His back is completely laid open from the scourging he had received with those bits of metal tied to the end of those leather strips. His face might even be starting to swell shut, like that guy that Manny Pacquiao beat last weekend. Remember the soldiers beat him and said, "Prophecy, who hit you?" Not a real inspiring picture when you hear the promise, "today you will be with me in paradise." That's God's promise to us as our King.

That's the promise of our King, but what you see today in this reading from the Gospel of Luke is that we have a king like no other king. He is the most unique king in the history of the world. Our King offers us a promise that demands faith that reason or that your eyes are not going to lead you to always believe. But when the Spirit works faith in your heart, the promise of our King gives you incredible comfort. That's what we see today, don't we? "Today you will be with my in paradise." That's what Jesus said on the cross. Words of our King.

He was called a king over and over in what I read to you, wasn't he? The leaders of the Jews who maybe at one point or another thought "Maybe he is the Messiah, the Chosen One," had turned on him because he wasn't the kind of messiah or chosen one they wanted. They knew "Messiah" meant "Anointed One," the same as the Greek word "Christ." The one anointed in the Old Testament, the Messiah that was talked about as the Anointed One, the One that would come to be the Savior. The "Chosen One" it said in the Old Testament "who would bring justice to the nations." To the leaders of the Jews at that place and in that time, justice to the nations meant "get

these Romans off of our back and out of our country. If the Chosen One is going to bring justice to our nation, that means get rid of the Romans.”

Jesus had performed miracles that made him look kind of like the Messiah or the Chosen One, but then he said things like “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and give to God what is God’s.” He kept pointing out their sins and he didn’t talk at all about getting rid of the Romans. So it wasn’t the messiah or the chosen one that they wanted. So they turned on him and shouted “Crucify! Crucify!” Then when he was on the cross, they mocked him. “If you’re the King, if you’re the Messiah, if you’re the Chosen One,” kings were anointed, “If you’re the one anointed to be the promised King, the Chosen King, come down from the cross, then we’ll believe you.”

Roman soldiers got in on the act. They mocked him as a king. They offered him that wine vinegar and then said the same things they had heard the Jews saying to him, “If you’re the King, come down from the cross.” Pilate mocked him as a king. He put above his head a sign that said, “This is the king of the Jews,” as much as saying to everyone there in Jerusalem, “Don’t mess with Rome. Don’t mess with Caesar. And don’t mess with me, Pontius Pilate, because this is what happens with anyone who dares to threaten the kingship of Caesar.”

Even the thief on the cross...really in the beginning of the day, both of them mocked him. At the end of the day, we hear this one saying “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us.” Everybody is talking about him as a king, but there’s only guy that is talking about it and is serious. The rest are all making fun of him. From everything their eyes could see, there was no reason not to make fun of him, right? Think of the amount of faith it took for this guy, this other thief on the cross, to set aside what his eyes could see. He was looking at Jesus. He wasn’t seeing the Jesus we see in paintings. He was seeing someone beaten, bloodied and humiliated. For Pete’s sake, there was probably dried spittle on his cheek. “You don’t look like a king.” Why in the world would he say, “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.” This doesn’t look like makeup for the coronation session.

There could only be one reason why he would say something like that...the Spirit worked faith in his heart. From what he heard of Jesus that day, from what he had seen in Jesus and his followers that day, he was led to believe that this man who was next to him enduring the same thing that he was enduring was true God. He says “You’re under the same sentence as God.” He believed that he was the Messiah who was going to establish a kingdom, not by force, not by getting rid of the Romans, but by living perfectly in our place and then dying in the place of everyone that ever has walked on the face of the earth or ever will walk on the face of the earth as the punishment that not his sins deserved, he’s done nothing wrong, but the sins that you and I have committed, to pay for them, to pay for all sins of all time.

This is the King’s promise. “Today you will be with me in paradise.” It’s an audacious promise. It is truly, to human reason, an unbelievable promise. The people that were there and heard this exchange had to believe these two guys now were becoming

oxygen deprived, that their lungs could not get enough air to their brain and they were hallucinating or something.

But that's how it always looks to human reason. The things that are of God and of God's Spirit, they make no sense to human reason. A Jewish carpenter lives 2,000 years ago, never owns a home, walks all over the place, teaches, does some magic tricks, and then dies as a common criminal and that's supposed to take away my sins? To human reason today, it still sounds foolish. But to those who the Spirit has worked faith in to believe these things that are of the Spirit, it is the greatest comfort you and I will ever have.

We don't have to pay for our sins. We don't have to try to butter up God, like some of your kids are probably already starting to do to get ready for those Christmas gifts. They're probably starting to butter you up a little bit, starting to circle things in catalogs and starting to do things a little more quickly. We don't have to do that. You and I can do what God asks us to do because we want to and because he's taken away all our sins completely and absolutely.

Here's his promise...he is the King who reigns, and in his reign, he reigns like no earthly king. He reigns in such a way to take care of eternity, not to take care of time, but to take care of eternity. Yet he tells us that even as he rules today, at the right hand of God, he is seeing to it that all things work out for the benefit of his people, the church, which is all believers everywhere. That's his promise to you and me. He is ruling. And because he has kept his promise that when we die, we will be with the Lord, we have every reason to believe his promise that he is a king who is in control of everything. Yet, our King rules in such paradoxes that sometimes we doubt many of his promises, don't we?

The Jews wanted a king that would get rid of the Romans. What kind of king do you want? When you hear that Jesus is your King who is ruling all things for your eternal good right now, what is it that you're saying? "Hey God, you're not doing so good in this area. Fix this area of my life." We face struggles. With joy we drink from the wells of salvation, like Isaiah said. But on this side of heaven, we are still living in a sinful world, we still have a sinful nature, and we are going to face all kinds of difficulties and all kinds of problems. Those problems at times get us to doubt that Jesus is our King who rules all things. And we say "Jesus, if you are my King who wants to rule everything for my good, why have you let this problem into my life, this relationship problem, this financial problem? Why have you let this sickness into my life? Why have you let my loved one leave me? Why have you let my loved one become sick?" We look at all these things and pretty soon we're just like those Jews that expected a different chosen one. We want our King to rule in a little different way than what he has chosen to rule.

Then we say, "God, if you love me, you wouldn't rule this way." We at least have Satan whispering that in our ear. And from what we can see, we doubt his promises. We sin

against our God with our lack of trust, with our doubts, with our lack of complete confidence in his gracious rule in our lives. And it's because he doesn't do things as we would expect.

If we would have figured that God was going to come as a king, we wouldn't think he would be beaten and bloodied, would we? We have the benefit of being on this side of Calvary and we can see exactly what he did. Because of that, the Spirit has led us to believe that he is our Savior. So we need the Spirit's help to trust at all times that he is our King who rules over everything for our good. And he gives that to us the more time we spend in the Word and the more times we say, "Lord, forgive me for doubting you" and then reading again his promises and reflecting again on how he has kept every one of his promises in Jesus.

Our God has never promised to rule as we see fit. He's promised to rule as he knows is best. We are sinful humans. He is a Holy God. But as our Holy God, he is also a merciful God who saw fit to save us. And because he has done that, you and I can believe what our eyes can't see. You and I can believe that our God has taken care of us in the best way possible. You and I can say, "Lord, I can't see it, but help my weakness of faith. Strengthen my faith through your Word and through your Sacrament." And our God will keep that promise as well.

That's one of the reasons he puts us together in congregations, so that we can encourage one another with the Gospel. He gives us these gifts, and he tells us to use them for the common good and that each one of us belongs to all the others. We aren't here to face all this alone. We are here as Christians to help one another and point one another back to the cross and to the undeniable evidence of God's love for us in Christ. And the God who found a way to conquer, even through his death, will find a way to keep us in the faith until the end. That's a promise that God has made that we can absolutely trust.

When you doubt it, get back into his Word and let his Spirit strengthen you.