

Luke 23:35-43

Christ the King; November 20 & 21, 2022

When Ronald Read died on June 2, 2014 in Vermont, no one knew how much he was worth. During his life, he didn't feel the need to spend more than he made. While he worked as a janitor and a gas station attendant, he never bought a flashy car, never bought a large home, never "flashed" his wealth around others. He maintained a very frugal lifestyle until his death. He never spent money unless he had to. He would be seen driving around a second-hand Toyota Yaris, using safety pins to hold his coat together and chopping firewood even after he had turned 90. When he died at the age of 92, no one had any idea that he was a multi-millionaire. How did he do it? He saved much of what he made. Even though he had relatively low paying jobs, he had also become a very good investor along with living a very frugal life. When he passed away, he had an estate worth about 8 million dollars. He left about 2 million dollars to his family, \$1.2 million to the local library and \$4.8 million to two small local hospitals. No one had any idea that he had that kind of wealth. He didn't look like a millionaire.

Robert Morin lived a very simple life. He never married. He worked at the University of New Hampshire as a librarian for about 50 years. He never went out to eat. He ate mostly frozen dinners, and sometimes coke and Fritos for breakfast. He drove older vehicles for most of his life. He wasn't a big spender, but he did keep busy. He was passionate about movie, and it was said that he had watched more than 22,000 videos from 1979-1997. He read every book published in America between 1930-1940, excluding children's books, text books and some cooking and technology books. He didn't really have any family to leave his estate to, and he trusted the school that he worked at to spend it wisely. So, after he died on March 31, 2015, he left a \$4 million estate to the school. No one had any idea that he had that kind of wealth. He didn't look like a millionaire.

Doris Schwartz had lived a frugal life in West York, Pennsylvania. She lived in an old rowhouse that had been inherited by her from her parents. She, however, did live a full life as a teacher and a flight attendant. But she lived modestly to say the least. She lived as if she was living in the Great Depression. She never spent money. She never really went anywhere outside of work. She never bought herself anything. She lived like a bag lady. No one knew that she was a multi-millionaire. When she died in 2013, she left an estate that was worth \$3.4 million to establish an endowment fund to further education of teachers and students in York County. No one had any idea that she had that kind of wealth. She didn't look like a millionaire.

I wonder what people must have felt about Jesus as they walked past him on Good Friday when he hung on the cross. Luke writes in our text today: **"The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One.' The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."** He sure didn't look like a king that day.

After all, what kind of king would let this happen to himself? This was not the King that the Jews were looking for. This was no Messiah hanging on the cross that day outside of Jerusalem. They had been waiting for a king who would restore them back to their glory days. They wanted to become that nation that would have the strength of the nation that King David had ruled over. They wanted once again to be that great nation that had been promised to Abraham. They wanted to be great. They wanted a Great King. Jesus was not the king that they were looking for. In fact, they perceived him more as a threat than a king for them. They wanted him dead. Yet, little did they realize that is exactly why Jesus had come. He had come to die as their king. He sure didn't look like a king that day. He certainly didn't look like the King of the Jews.

Yet, the cross was always part of God's plan. Jesus had to be there on that cross. The people mocked him: **"He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."** The soldiers mocked him: **"If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."** They should have been afraid that he could have done exactly what they were asking him to do. He could have jumped off that cross and wiped them from the face of the earth. He could have saved himself. There is no question about that. But it took an incredible amount of power and an incredible amount of love to stay on that cross on that day. This cross was the whole reason that Jesus had come into the world.

At first glance, this seems to be kind of a strange text for the last Sunday of the Church Year. We have spent an entire year once again following Jesus through his life on this earth and what that life and death means for us. Next Sunday, we begin the season of Advent. It just seems a little strange to have this text of Good Friday once again be used here at the end of the Church Year. Yet, this is the perfect text to end a church year. This is the whole entire point of not just another church year, but really the entire point of the Bible. Jesus is our King. This king has come into this world to crush the head of the serpent. This King has come to be our Savior. This is exactly the kind of a King that we need. This King is not just the king of the Jews, this is the King of the World. This is the King who has come to once again restore Paradise to us.

That was what Jesus was telling this criminal that was hanging next to him when he asked Jesus: **“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”** This man next to Jesus was guilty of whatever crime he had done. He deserved to die. No question about it. But on the cross that day, that thief next to Jesus received the *“not guilty”* verdict from the Son of God. **“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** That the message that Jesus, the King, brings to you today as well.

God wants you to know that he remembers you. He also wants you to know that he **“remembers your sins no more.”** (Is. 43:25) Why? God looks at his Son hanging on that cross and see him take all your sins upon him. God wants you to know that he will always love you so much. He wants to give you joys that you can't even imagine in heaven. You may not always look like it on the outside. You may not always feel like it every day. But God wants you to know that you are oh so rich in Jesus. That is what you have in Jesus, our King. Amen.