

Luke 23:35-43

Christ the King; November 23 & 24, 2025

It was one year ago last weekend that I had surgery to remove part of my colon after doctors found cancer in my colon. I can still picture the moment a couple of weeks before the surgery when the doctor called me on my cell phone—just before I headed home for lunch—and said, “*You have cancer.*” Even though he had warned me that this was a real possibility, hearing the diagnosis confirmed still shook me to the core.

Everything began to move quickly after that. I met with the surgeon. I went through a series of tests. I had to line up people to take over my responsibilities here at St. Paul’s. And as all of this unfolded at such a fast pace, I have to admit—I started asking the question: *Why?* I trusted God fully, yet I still wished He had not allowed cancer to enter my life.

After the surgery, my surgeon told me she was confident she had removed the cancerous section and that it had not spread beyond that area. They believed the cancer was gone. It’s hard to put into words the joy and relief that filled my heart. I know it could return someday, but for now, it was gone. And through it all, I held onto this truth: Jesus is my King, and whatever comes, I will be okay.

Perhaps some of you have faced moments like this in your own life. At the time, it may have seemed as if Jesus was nowhere to be found, as if He were not really King. But then, in His way and timing, He worked things out to show that He truly is **Christ the King**. Today is the last Sunday of the Church year. The Christian Church has called this Sunday as *Christ the King Sunday*. Over the past twelve months, we have followed the life of Jesus:

- His birth,
- His growth,
- His teaching and preaching,
- His miracles and raising people from the dead,
- His death on the cross and resurrection,
- His ascension into heaven, and the growth of His Church.

We have heard His call to live our lives in gratitude for all He has done. Through it all, we have seen once again that **Jesus is our King!** Next Sunday, as the season of Advent begins, we will start the story anew—rejoicing in our King who comes to save. It might seem a little unusual to end the Church Year with the words of our text. After all, it could easily be read on Good Friday. But why today? Jesus wants us to know that He is the **King of kings and Lord of lords** because of what He accomplished for the world through His death on Calvary. It is on the cross that Jesus shows us that he is our King. So today, let us look at these words and clearly see that **Christ is our King**.

Why are you here this morning? You got up, got dressed, and made your way here—there must be a reason. Hopefully, it wasn’t just for the Kwik Trip donuts and coffee! Every Sunday, believers all around the world gather together, coming to the foot of the cross. But why? What are they hoping to see? What are we hoping to see? What were the people, who were gathered around his feet, come to see? What do we come to see?

People come for all kinds of different reasons to see Jesus. **“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. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”**

People were gathered at Calvary for many reasons. Some were mocking—rulers, soldiers, and crowds jeering at what they thought was a failed king. Some were watching, curious to see the spectacle, not realizing they were witnessing God’s plan of salvation. Some were waiting, hoping for a miracle or a display of power, unaware that the greatest miracle was already happening. And some were weeping, grieving as they watched the One they loved suffer. Everyone had a reason to be there—different motives, fears, and expectations. But Jesus—He knew exactly why He was there. He was there to become the King of the Hill.

When I was a kid, we often played a game called “*King of the Hill*.” It usually happened after a big snowstorm, using the large piles of snow left in the parking lot of my school. The goal was simple: *climb to the top, push everyone else down, and stay there as long as you could*. We weren’t exactly gentle about the pushing and shoving—though somehow, we always survived! (I still can’t believe anyone let us play like that.)

The people of Israel were looking for a King who would rise above all the powers of their day. They wanted a king who displayed strength, dominance, and the ability to eliminate rivals. They wanted Rome defeated, the throne taken, and a reign marked by visible power. But that’s not why Jesus came, is it? Instead, of seeing Jesus as a King, they saw a man with:

- No crown – only thorns;
- No throne – only a cross;
- No royal robe – only stripped garments;
- No army – only mockers;
- No power – only hanging in weakness.

Yet on that cross, Jesus accomplished something far greater than any earthly king could: He crushed the head of the devil. He is the King we truly need, though Satan wants us to forget it.

Do you remember the story of *The Lion King*? After Mufasa’s death, Simba was meant to become king. But his uncle, Scar, wanted the throne for himself and tried to make Simba believe he was to blame for his father’s death. What does Simba do? He runs away, forgetting his role as prince and future king. It takes the rest of the story for Simba to grow, return, and take his rightful place as king.

As Christians, we can relate to Simba. Sin can fill us with guilt and shame, tempting us to run from Jesus. Bit by bit, we can forget who we truly are—redeemed children of God—and lose sight of who is King in our lives. But Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He never forgets us.

The thief hanging next to Jesus recognized this and said, “**Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.**” And the King replied, “**Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.**” Our King speaks the same promise to each of us. That is what He wants us to remember: He is in control of all things. He is for you. And that is what the cross shows. What a beautiful way to close another Church Year. Jesus is our King, and we belong to Him. Amen.