

“A King Who Remembers Us”

St. John’s – East Moline

Lk. 23:35-43

11/20/22

Intro.: All of us want to be remembered. It’s embarrassing, even humiliating to be forgotten. Business people put their names and phone numbers on cards hoping that people will remember them and work with them. Some people donate money so that a plaque will remind others of their contribution to a worthy cause. After our death, family members want to remember us by purchasing headstones or grave markers. It is important to remember and be remembered.

As we gather here again today remembering and celebrating the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and King, Jesus Christ, the question we need answered is: “Will He remember us?” In today’s Gospel there were a number of people who remembered Jesus.

I. Jesus’ Enemies Remembered Him And Mocked Him.

A. The rulers remembered Jesus. They remembered with bitterness that He had exposed their false religion and threatened the way of life they had chosen for themselves. They remembered with jealousy the divine signs and glorious wonders that had accompanied His teaching, how He healed the sick and even raised the dead, and how the crowds had followed Him. They remember all the wonderful claims He had made about Himself. And so as the people stood watching, the rulers, remembered, sneered at Him and said, *“He saved others; let him save himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.”* (v.35)

B. The soldiers around the cross also remembered Jesus. Some of them may have remembered His brutal and bloody scourging. They may have been among those who had pierced His head with a crown of thorns, placed a robe on the torn flesh of his back, and put a staff in His hand so that they could scoff at Him. Of all the people of Palestine this one, the weakest and most despicable of all, had a sign hanging over His head that identified Him as the King of the Jews. Some King! All they saw was a weak and dying man, a helpless criminal nailed to a cross. The soldiers remembered Him and mocked him; offering him wine vinegar they said, *“If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”* (v.37)

C. Even the impenitent criminal who was hanging beside Him remembered Jesus. He had probably heard of the things Christ had done and how many had believed that He was the promised Messiah. What a disappointment! This was certainly not the kind of Savior and God that man wanted, so he also lashed out at Jesus and hurled insults at Him, saying, *“Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us.”* (v.39)

Application: Still today there are many who remember Jesus. They remember with bitterness what Jesus says about the false religions they have tailor made to fit their own deviant opinions and to excuse their sinful lifestyles. They remember with jealousy how Jesus’ challenges them and seeks to take his place at the center of their lives. They remember and mock the foolishness of the cross. They laugh at the idea that after all these years Jesus will keep His promise to return in glory to judge the world. They remember Jesus, but like the impenitent criminal they insult Him because He is not the kind of God and Savior they want.

Transition: But there were others there at Jesus’ crucifixion who remembered Him in another way. One of them was the repentant criminal who was also hanging beside Jesus. He represents all of us who remember Jesus to be the very God and Savior we need. Our Gospel shows us that...

II. The Repentant Sinner Remembers Jesus And Calls Out To Him.

A. Our Gospel reading relates that immediately after the first criminal insulted Jesus he was challenged by the other who may have actually been his friend and cohort in crime. Remembering His own sinfulness and the holiness and love of Jesus he rebuked the impenitent criminal saying, *“Don’t you fear God since you are under the same sentence. We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”* (vv.40-41)

Then the repentant criminal turned to Jesus, looked at Him and remembered. He probably remembered the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. He looked at Jesus and realized that every detail of Psalmists vivid description of the Savior’s crucifixion was taking place right before his eyes. [Cf. Ps.22] He looked at the wounds and stripes on Jesus’ body and remembered the prophecy of Isaiah and how God promised to lay on His suffering servant all our sins to heal us and bring us peace through His agony. He looked at Jesus and remembered how John had called him the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Remembering his own sin and the promises of God in Christ, the repentant criminal, turned and looked at Jesus and prayed, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* (v.42)

B. We are here today in the spirit of that man. We, like him, remember our own sinfulness and the holiness and love of Jesus. We look upon Jesus with our eyes of faith and we remember all the prophecies, all the promises, and all the things He said and did to deliver us from sin, death and the power of the devil. We remember that He loved us so much that He came down from heaven to be born of the Virgin Mary. We remember that He placed Himself under the law and kept it perfectly for us. We remember that He suffered at the hands of evil people like us, died on a cross because of our sin, and was buried in a borrowed tomb so that we may be freed from death. We remember that He descended into hell to proclaim His victory, that He rose again to give us the assurance of eternal life, and that He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us. We remember that He has given us the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of Baptism, the spoken, written and sung Word and His Holy Supper to call us to faith and give us salvation. We remember that He promised to intercede for us at the right hand of the Father and that He would come again in glory to deliver us from every evil and raise and transform these bodies to be like His own glorified body. We remember Jesus, and like that man beside Him we look to Him and with repentant hearts pray, *“Lord, Jesus, remember me and let Thy kingdom come.”* As we gather here today, we remember Jesus, but the question remains *“Will Jesus, our King, remember us? The answer is certain and comforting...”*

III. Our King Remembers Us – He Always Remembers Us.

A. He remembered every one of us from the cross and brought us into His kingdom when he looked down upon the crowds and across the centuries upon our faces and pleaded, *“Father, forgive them.”* (v.34) There, by taking our place under God’s judgment and giving his holy life in exchange for our sinful ones Jesus opened the kingdom of heaven to us. There, in the midst of agony our thorn crowned king remembered us and interceded for us with his dying breath. And because of this, as our epistle says, *“[God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ...in [Christ] God was reconciling all things to Himself...making peace by the blood of His cross.”* (Col. 1:13-14,20) Because Christ, our King, remembered us from the cross our sins are forgiven and forgotten and we have been made citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Even now, Christ remembers us and continues to intercede for us at the right hand of the Father. Still, he pleads, *“Father, forgive them!”* and it is done. Another thing our Gospel assures us is that...

B. Christ, our King, remembers us at the hour of our death. After the repentant thief turned to Jesus and asked to be remembered, Jesus assured Him: *“Today, you will be with me in paradise.”* (v.43)

Over the years of serving the Lord and His people, I have been with many repentant sinners in their hour of death. I have witnessed the certainty and comfort of faith that comes to them when they remember Jesus and His love, and are able to pray, *“Jesus, remember me and take me into your kingdom!”* And what a joyful thing it is to know that they have heard the Lord answered them, *“Today, you will be with me in paradise!”* and then to see Him carry them through death to live with Him while awaiting the day of resurrection. And what a day that will be, when Christ the King returns in all His glory with all who have departed this life in faith; when He comes with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven to judge, to raise-up the dead and to glorify those who remember him in faith. In our Old Testament reading the prophet assures us that...

C. Our King will remember us when he comes again in glory. He writes, *“The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. ‘They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.’”* (Mal. 3:16-18) Repeatedly in His Word, our King, Jesus Christ, assures us that we will be remembered when He returns in glory. Our names are written in heaven, in the Lamb’s book of life, so that we will be remembered and set apart for glory. The King of glory will separate us out as His treasured possession and we will hear him say, *“Come, you who are blessed by my Father and take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.”* (Matt. 25:34) He will remember everything we did through faith, and all we did to serve Him and glorify of His name. Our sin will be forgotten, but we will be remembered. He will remember us and His promises to deal with us according to His grace.

Concl.: What a blessing it is to remember and to be remembered! What a comfort to know that we have a King who remembers us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.