

11/23/25
Christ the King
For Group Meetings from November 16th – November 22nd

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, our true life, to serve you is freedom, and to know you is unending joy. We worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory. Abide with us, reign in us, and make this world into a fit habitation for your divine majesty, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 21:5-19) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 23:33-43

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Where does this scene take place? Who is present at the crucifixion?
2. What words does Jesus speak from the cross in this passage?
3. How does each criminal respond to Jesus?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who in your life needs to hear a message of forgiveness and hope?
2. Share a time recently you have either shared or received grace.
3. What is the most difficult or dangerous thing you have ever done?

Memorize this verse: "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'" (Luke 23:42) What helps you remember you are a child of God?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 46. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

"What kind of king do you want?" In one sense, this is the question Jesus put before those crucify him. Keep in mind that just days earlier the crowds of Jerusalem had greeted Jesus as their king, rolling out the "red carpet" by spreading their cloaks on the road, and receiving him as the one sent by the Lord. And now he is rejected, derided by the leaders of the people, then the soldiers, and even one of the criminals next to them. They mock his titles, asking why, if he is Messiah, chosen One, and King, he does not save himself. "What kind of king do you want?" Jesus asks them. And they reply that they want a different king, one who is powerful, one who can save himself and others, one who can take vengeance on his and their enemies. But Jesus doesn't do that. He refuses to come in power but instead appears in abject vulnerability. He does not vow retribution on even those who crucify him but instead offers forgiveness. He does not come down off his cross to prove his kingly status but instead remains on that instrument of torture and humiliation, the representative of all who suffer unjustly. And he does not promise a better tomorrow but instead offers to redeem us today. Jesus doesn't tell the repentant criminal that someday in the future he will enter into God's presence but instead says "Today, you shall be with me in paradise." Today, now, in this very moment. Christians have sometimes been accused of pining for a distant and better future and therefore sitting out the struggles and challenges of the day. But in these verses, Jesus is focused on this very moment, promising that those who believe in him, those who see in his vulnerability the revelation of God's mercy and grace, will be ushered into God's presence immediately.

In Luke's story of the crucifixion, the one dimension of Jesus that is emphasized above all others is Jesus' innocence. Notice the words of the repentant criminal as he rebukes his comrade: "We indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but his man has done nothing wrong." The verses that follow these are even more direct, as the Roman centurion, after witnessing Jesus' death, declares, "Certainly this man was innocent." Luke's depiction is a stark departure from that of Matthew and Luke, who record the centurion as saying, "Truly this man was God's Son." In this account, it is Jesus' innocence, rather than his divine connection that is most important. And this is not to heighten our sense of tragedy but to remind us that Jesus stands with all the innocent of the world, all the vulnerable and forgotten, all those who suffer injustice and oppression. And when he is raised, he promises God's vindication to all those the world has similarly discarded.

The church of Jesus Christ reveals itself as faithful to its Lord only in so far as it stands with those who are most vulnerable. Whatever our understandable desire for strength and security, God calls us not only to identify with the weak and dispossessed, but to lift our voices on their behalf, calling us to care for them as parents care for their children. "What kind of king do you want?" Jesus asks. And the answer most gave him, both in the first century and often in the twenty-first, is "Not this one," preferring instead some demonstration of power to vulnerability. Except for those moments when, like the criminal who requested God's mercy, we recognize that if we are to get what we deserve, then we have no hope. If we choose to live in a world where might makes right, we will all eventually lose. And if we prefer a world where the rule of the day is "an eye for an eye," all of us will be blind. At those moments, Jesus reminds us that far from promising us a better future, he redeems us today, not only forgiving us for what we have done or not done, but setting us free to stand with those in need around us, advocating for their welfare, demanding their just treatment, and seeing in them the very presence of the God who always takes the side of the vulnerable.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen