



LIVING THE GOSPEL

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of The Universe. November 23rd 2025

Theme: 'Indeed, I promise you, he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.'

Gathering Prayer

All: Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 23:35-43

³⁵The people stayed there watching him. As for the leaders, they jeered at him. 'He saved others,' they said 'let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' ³⁶The soldiers mocked him too, and when they approached to offer him vinegar ³⁷they said, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself'. ³⁸Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'.

³⁹One of the criminals hanging there abused him. 'Are you not the Christ?' he said. 'Save yourself and us as well.' ⁴⁰But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, ⁴¹but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. ⁴²Jesus,' he said 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.' ⁴³'Indeed, I promise you,' he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.'

Gospel Focus

This gospel reveals the utter incongruity between how God sees power and how we do. Soldiers and criminals alike scoff at Jesus' powerlessness and his apparent inability to save himself after he has performed wonders on other's behalf. However, this is not how God works. God's power is not self-serving but is born of love. Jesus exercises that power in ways that are not visible to human eyes accustomed to the ways of a sinful world. Giving over control and even his life *is* his power. This is hard to recognize, but not impossible, one of the criminals crucified alongside Jesus sees and believes that his story is not over and his kingdom is yet to come.

Gospel Reflection

Several people in Jesus' days were looking for a king like David, who would reassert Israel's independence, rid the land of the Romans, and make wise decisions for the people.

There were advantages to monarchical rule; one man invested with authority could carry the weight of governance and make decisions on behalf of the people. But there were also disadvantages. What if the ruler did not have foremost the peoples' best interest? What if his judgement was impaired by greed and hunger for power? What voice did the common folk have in decisions that affected their lives? What chance was there that women's perspectives would be heard?

When Jesus appeared, proclaiming God's kingdom, he offered an antidote to imperial ways. He criticized the way the "kings of the Gentiles" lorded their power over their people and demanded recognition for their benefaction.

By contrast, he urged the leaders among his followers to be the servants of all (Luke 22:25-26), a manner of life he modelled for them, as he took up his itinerant mission with people at the lowest rung of society. Unlike an offended monarch who imposes harsh punishments for infractions, he instead exercised power through forgiveness and compassion when there were transgressions.

Today's gospel paints in stark contrast the power of imperial Rome, which brooks no challenges to its rule, and the "kingly" ways of Jesus that rest on forgiveness and love. Even as it appears that the former may win out, the gospel makes it utterly clear that Jesus' merciful rule cannot be extinguished by death.

Even as he is mocked and taunted in his dying moments, Jesus continues to exercise the power of forgiveness both toward his executioners (23:24) and toward one of the criminals who acknowledges his form of power and asks to be included.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading – 2 Sam 5:1-3

¹All the tribes of Israel then came to David at Hebron. 'Look' they said 'we are your own flesh and blood. ²In days past when Saul was our king it was you who led Israel in all their exploits; and Yahweh said to you, "You are the man who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you shall be the leader of Israel". ³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a pact with them at Hebron in the presence of Yahweh, and they anointed David king of Israel.

Responsorial Reading – Ps 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

R: Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord. (R)

I rejoiced because they said to me, "We will go up to the house of the Lord." And now we have set foot within your gates, O Jerusalem. **(R)**

Jerusalem, built as a city with compact unity. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord. **(R)**

According to the decree for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. In it are set up judgment seats, seats for the house of David. **(R)**

Second Reading – Col 1:12-20

¹²We give thanks to the Father who has made it possible for you to join the saints and

with them to inherit the light. ¹³Because that is what he has done: he has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves, ¹⁴and in him, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins. ¹⁵He is the image of the unseen God and the first-born of all creation, ¹⁶for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible, Thrones, Dominations, Sovereignities, Powers—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity. ¹⁸Now the Church is his body, he is its head. As he is the Beginning, he was first to be born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; ¹⁹because God wanted all perfection to be found in him ²⁰and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, when he made peace by his death on the cross.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

440. Jesus accepted Peter's profession of faith, which acknowledged him to be the Messiah, by announcing the imminent Passion of the Son of Man. (Cf. Mt 16:16-23.) He unveiled the authentic content of his messianic kingship both in the transcendent identity of the Son of Man "who came down from heaven", and in his redemptive mission as the suffering Servant: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Jn 3:13; Mt 20:28; cf. Jn 6:62; Dan 7:13; Isa 53:10-12.) Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross. (Cf. Jn 19:19-22; Lk 23:39-43.) Only after his Resurrection will Peter be able to proclaim Jesus' messianic kingship to the People of God: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36)

1021. Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ. (Cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10.) The New Testament speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith. The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief, as well as other New Testament texts speak of a final destiny of the soul—a destiny which can be different for some and for others. (Cf. Lk 16:22; 23:43; Mt 16:26; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23.)

2605. When the hour had come for him to fulfill the Father's plan of love, Jesus allows a glimpse of the boundless depth of his filial prayer, not only before he freely delivered himself up ("Abba . . . not my will, but yours."), (Lk 22:42) but even in his last words on the Cross, where prayer and the gift of self are but one: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; (Lk 23:34) "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise", "Woman, behold your son" - "Behold your mother"; (Jn 19:26-27.) "I thirst."; (Jn 19:28) "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"; (Mk 15:34; cf. Ps 22:2) "It is finished"; (Jn 19:30) "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (Lk 23:46) until the "loud cry" as he expires, giving up his spirit. (Cf. Mk 15:37; Jn 19:30b)

2616. Prayer to Jesus is answered by him already during his ministry, through signs that anticipate the power of his death and Resurrection: Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words (the leper, Jairus, the Canaanite woman, the good thief) (Cf. Mk 1:40-41; 5:36; 7:29; Cf. Lk 23:39-43) or in silence (the bearers of the paralytic, the woman with a hemorrhage who touches his clothes, the tears and ointment of the sinful woman). (Cf. Mk 25; 5:28; Lk 7:37-38) The urgent request of the blind men, "Have mercy on us, Son of David" or "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" has been renewed in the traditional prayer to Jesus known as the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!" (Mt 9:27, Mk 10:48) Healing

infirmities or forgiving sins, Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith: "Your faith has made you well; go in peace."

St. Augustine wonderfully summarizes the three dimensions of Jesus' prayer: "He prays for us as our priest, prays in us as our Head, and is prayed to by us as our God. Therefore let us acknowledge our voice in him and his in us."

2266. The efforts of the state to curb the spread of behavior harmful to people's rights and to the basic rules of civil society correspond to the requirement of safeguarding the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offense. Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offense. When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation.

Sharing and Discussion

1. In the 1st reading, God raised David for His purpose. Do you sense God quietly choosing you for a mission, however small? What grace do you need to say "yes" more fully?
2. Read the hymn from Colossians (1:15-20) slowly. Which phrase about Jesus speaks to you the loudest at this moment in your life of faith?
3. On this feast of Christ the King of the Universe, why do you think the church would choose us to read and meditate on Jesus' crucifixion.

Closing Prayer

All: God of mercy, you respond to the humble prayers of your people with generosity and compassion. Hear our prayers and receive the needs of our world with healing and with grace. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.