

# Jesus, Remember Me

Christ the King Sunday – November 21, 2010

Jeremiah 23:1-6 Canticle 16 Colossians 1:11-20 Luke 23:33-43

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*An angel talking to  
a mother.*

*A criminal talking  
to a son.*

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We can not get to the beginning, until we deal with the end. The gospel reading today from Luke sounds a great deal more like something we'd read together in Holy Week, than on Christ the King Sunday. It sounds more like the beginning of Good Friday, than it does the end of the church year. The Lectionary challenges us today to spend time at the foot of the cross before we get ready to approach the manger.

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As we have spent time with Jesus during his fateful trip to Jerusalem we have heard plenty about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed – the kingdom of God is like yeast – like a sower of seeds – like a little child – like a net let down into the lake. A camel even has something to tell us about the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, Jesus has told us, is like a great many things. He's used

example after example, trying to teach us that the kingdom of God that we are to seek is a different kind of kingdom.

For all of that we've heard about the kingdom of God, you would think that it was on everyone's mind, all the time. Disciples, the people, the Pharisees, the scribes, the sick, the possessed – everyone engaging in conversation with Jesus about the kingdom of God – right? Well – that's not so, at least in Luke's gospel.

With all of those stories about the kingdom, as Luke has left us the story, no one – not even the disciples, ever responded – never asked a single question.

At the very beginning of the Gospel, an angel tells the very young, very frightened and no doubt very overwhelmed Mary, that the son she would bear would be the Son of God, and that his kingdom would have no end. That's the first time in the Gospel that the kingdom of God is mentioned.

And then we have today's Gospel. In the last conversation that Jesus has before he is executed, another criminal convicted of a capital offense, also hanging on a cross,

asks Jesus to remember him, when Jesus enters his kingdom.

An angel talking to the mother. Don't forget these things, the angel said.

A condemned man talking to the son. Remember me, the criminal said.

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Ironic, isn't it. As Jesus hangs dying on the cross: religion is laughing at him, the empire is laughing at him, even his fellow victims of the empire's violence are laughing at him.

*The leaders scoffed at him, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!"*

*The soldiers mocked him, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"*

*One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"*

The voice of religion, the voice of the empire, and the voice of the empire's victims.

And *then*, after all that we've heard, after all that we've witnessed, after all that we've been taught, we hear the voice of the only person – the only human being before the resurrection – who gives voice to understanding. Remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

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At the end of his earthly life, Jesus responds with the same message that he's been trying to get across all along.

Jesus did not say – *yes, you'll be with me in the kingdom in the sweet by-and-by, when we meet on that beautiful shore.*

Jesus did not say – *well – hold that thought, I'll be back in three days – see you on Easter Sunday.*

Jesus said – today.

Today you will be with me in paradise.

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To what shall we compare the kingdom of heaven?

If Jesus were telling us those stories today, we probably would not hear about mustard seeds, or nets, or camels. There would probably be something about cars, and computers, and cable TV. But I fear that we would still have violence. The kingdoms of this world, the powers and the principalities, still do not want to hear about this other kind of kingdom.

Where the poor are lifted up, where those who mourn are comforted, where those who are hungry get something to eat.

We are called to keep telling that story.

An angel talking to the mother. A kingdom

without end.

Don't' forget these things, the angel said,  
speaking on behalf of God.

A condemned man talking to the son.

Remember me, the criminal said, speaking  
on behalf of the rest of us.