

Sermon Notes November 20th, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 23:33-43

Scripture: Luke 23:33-43, NRSV

33 When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[**34** Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. **35** And the people stood by watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” **36** The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine **37** and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” **38** There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41** And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” **42** Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” **43** He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Sermon

This morning, as a church, we celebrate Christ the King Sunday. This Sunday is a relatively new day on the liturgical calendars. It is less than a hundred years old. The day was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 and moved to its current date in 1970. By the late 1970s, the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship adopted an amended version of the Roman lectionary, and it included Christ the King.

As Pope Pius and other faithful Christians began to see the respect and reverence for Christ’s authority diminishing, this feast was put in place to reaffirm and refocus faith and respect in the kingship of Jesus.

Some of the major roles of a king are to protect the poor and protect the kingdom. Christ did this and more. Jesus focused on the poor and marginalized during His earthly ministry. While He was a king, he embraced the lowly and called the disciples to do the same.

Today is the last Sunday in the liturgical year. For us, at Bay View, I have been using Year C as an opportunity for us to walk ourselves through our baptismal promises. On Tuesday, I talked to Dori and then the Learning-Slash-Youth Board and we were contemplating giving you a quiz to see if you could name ALL five. Would the adults or the confirmation students score higher? In the end, we were not sure how to pull off a quiz even though we thought playing a game of Jeopardy could be fun:

PJ, I will take serve all people following the example of Jesus for 400.

Instead, I am simply going to list them for you and share how many times I preached on that promise. With different sermons on Sunday and Wednesday’s, I preached through them sixty-nine times.

I preached on “*live among God’s faithful people*” fourteen times.

I preached on “*hear the word of God and share in the Lord’s Supper*” thirteen times.

I preached on “*proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed*” sixteen times, including today.

I preached on “*serve all people following the example of Jesus*” twelve times.

Finally, I preached on “*strive for justice and peace in all the earth?*” fourteen times.

Each of the gospel writers have a distinct emphasis. We have traveled all the way through Luke these last twenty weeks. Luke was really about the interactions that Jesus had with the individuals that he connected with. I think that is why Luke spends no time on setting up the crucifixion. Instead, he focuses

in on the chatter around the cross and the conversation that Jesus has with the criminals that are being crucified on both sides of him.

The other side of the coin was that Luke probably felt that he did not need to set up the scene. Everyone hearing the story in the first century would have known and most likely witnessed the grotesqueness of the act. One of the things that we may not be fully aware of is that crucifixion cemented the thought and belief that the individual on the cross was not a person. Rome was asserting their right and power to carry out this despicable act.

While on the cross, Jesus continues his inclusive message:

All are forgiven. All are invited.

While on the cross, the crowd and roman soldiers were mocking him. They even made a dig at him with the offer of sour wine. While he is being mocked, one of the criminals decided to join them in mocking Jesus. Now, the story gets a little interesting. The other criminal begins to defend Jesus.

In his defending Jesus, he opens up some intriguing aspects to consider. He clearly states that the cross is justly given to him and his counterpart on the other side of Jesus. Then his language can be interpreted to say that the cross is horrific yet there is more to fear if God turned against them. Then he takes a big advance in his conversation. He defends the innocence of Jesus and points to him as being a bearer of God mission.

How does Jesus respond? He once again gives a message of hope. In addition to hope, he offers him grace and forgiveness. He then humanizes this conversation. Remember, the Romans used the cross to de-humanize. Jesus uses personalized pronouns in you and me.

This passage, once again, let's us reflect on the aspect that the theme of God's salvation comes to us in the midst of crisis. Then, with the salvation, we are called to have a firm faith even when life is overwhelming.

I mentioned last week that I believe many individuals are in the midst of being overwhelmed. Last week, one of my colleagues shared a twenty-three word that I shared on my Facebook page and think that it ties in perfectly to being overwhelmed. Thus, let me share it with you:

Dear God:

I'm not okay. I'm not myself, I'm drained.

Please calm my mind, please heal my heart, and take my worries away.

Amen.

When I was taking a look at this text, I was originally going to take a hard-long look at the Roman legal system that was in place. I think many times we gloss over the fact that Jesus was executed by the Roman government. However, there were certain Jewish leaders that cooperated with the system and brought charges against him that led to the execution. I was then going to challenge us to take a look at our justice system that may not be fair to all because there is a lot of power in the system.

However, what stood out to me when I read and re-read the text multiple time was the prayer of forgiveness. I never realized it or never really paid attention, I guess that Jesus does not name for "whom" he was praying for. Thus, I think that we can receive this forgiveness. God forgave those who crucified Jesus and God will forgive us as well.

Then, I let my mind wonder. I was thinking about the criminal who was mocking Jesus. I am positive that the criminal knew his joining in the mocking of Jesus was not going to have them bring him down from

the cross. However, because of their influence, their power and their initial mocking, this opened up the door for him to mock.

For us, I think many times our actions are influenced by our beliefs and those who may cast that first stone and we join in. Now, hear me clearly, the product of us being in a particular environment does not excuse our behavior and it also does not eliminate the consequences of our action. However, God does forgive. God not only forgives, but God gives the strength to repent and live up to the promises that we made in our baptismal promises.

Up on the cross, Jesus promised to give the criminal who confessed his sins, a place in paradise. We are not sure what the criminal thought he might be receiving. We might not even know. In our Tuesday morning bible study, we were talking about what does today mean? What does paradise mean?

I think when we take a look at the full narrative, we can get a little better understanding. When we reflect back to the first words of Jesus when he began his ministry he told the crowd that had gathered that he was sent to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. He opened up the scroll that was given to him and read the following:

God's Spirit is on me; he's chosen me to preach the Message of good news to the poor, Sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, To set the burdened and battered free, to announce, "This is God's time to shine!"

I think that this message is vital for us at Bay View. We need to be reminded and realize that the kingdom of God for Jesus was about a world where those on the bottom of society in His day would find liberation from the systems and structures that bind them.

We, as a church community, can proclaim this message. We can proclaim the good news and one of the ways that we can do this is by showing forgiveness and advocating for those who are facing injustices in our county. Then may we be reminded that the words that Jesus used that we might not fully comprehend: paradise and today extends to those in our community that we don't believe deserve it.

Amen.