

Christ the King (Proper 29)

November 23, 2025



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

To speak more clearly of (the cross of Christ), you should not take it to mean this or that wood on which Christ hung suspended; but the cross of Christ is the shame and the great indignity which Christ innocently suffered... The shame and persecution endured for righteousness' sake is the cross of Christ.

– Martin Luther–

Sermon, October 22, 1522

Malachi 3:13-18

One of the less charming behaviors of children is when they are given a task to do and their first question is, “What will I get if I do it?” There is a mindset at work here that suggests that they deserve to be rewarded for doing what is expected of them. If the reward is not sufficient then the task is really not worth doing.

Israel had a complaint, or if not a complaint, at least a question for God and his prophet. What benefit is there to being obedient to the commands of God? What would they get for it? Everywhere they looked they saw faithless evildoers prospering while they went around like mourners. They could see no upside to worshipping the Lord. Somehow, they convinced themselves that such sentiments were not harsh critiques of God, but simply observations of reality. But Malachi identified these sentiments for what they were: attacks on faith.

- *Have you ever wondered if there is a clear benefit in this life to worshipping God?*
- *What evidence do you see that the wicked prosper?*

In spite of what they were seeing all around them, some in Israel continued to revere the Lord. They continued to think on his name. They were promised that one day they would finally see clearly the difference between those who serve God and those who do not.

Psalms 46

This psalm is a call to worship. It is an invitation to the community to come together and sing praises to the Lord who our rock and our salvation.

- *How might you explain to someone what it means to call God “our rock?” What attributes does that image highlight?*

The psalmist describes the sovereignty of God by reminding Israel of the creative nature of the Lord. He created the depths of the earth and the highest heights of the mountains. He dug the sea and filled it with water, and he smoothed the dry land and made it inhabitable.

- *When are the times you think about God’s creativity the most?*

Colossians 1:13-20

Part of our bondage to sin is that we cannot see the world as it really is. We look at the trappings of this life and we

imagine them to be the best of what God has to offer. So when Paul speaks of Christ rescuing us from the power of darkness, we might not be entirely sure what he is talking about. The world isn’t so bad. We’re not so bad.

- *When you think about this world do you think of it as mostly light or mostly dark?*
- *How do your social or economic circumstances shape how you see the world?*

The reality of our situation is that we are living in the realm of darkness and that darkness has infiltrated our own hearts. Apart from the forgiveness of our sins we have no hope of peace with God. But forgiveness and reconciliation, peace with God, is precisely what Jesus has brought to us through his death and resurrection.

- *Does forgiveness and reconciliation seem like enough? Do we sometimes look for a greater reward?*

Luke 23:27-43

It says a great deal about our low expectations or cynical nature that as people looked upon Jesus on the cross one of their scornful comments was that if he were actually a king he would save himself. That is what a king is expected to do. It seems we do not expect our leaders to make sacrifices for others or to face adversity head on. The true sign of kingship would have been for Jesus to save himself. Even if that meant everyone else be damned, at least we would know for certain that he was a king.

- *What kind of behavior do we expect from powerful people?*

And that, more or less, summarizes why the crowds, the religious leaders, and we, have such difficulty recognizing Jesus as king, Lord, or Messiah. He simply refuses to conform to our expectations of what kingship looks like. Even today, as we celebrate Christ the King Sunday we will likely want to do so with majestic and celebratory songs about Jesus’ triumphant victory and his golden crown. But Jesus shows us what he means to be a king when he does not turn away from the cross, when he forgives the very ones who are putting him to death, when he refuses to save himself at the expense of the whole world. This is who our king is, and we can expect that his kingdom is a reflection of him.

- *What does Jesus’ death show us about God’s power?*
- *How does Jesus’ crown of thorns remind us of our call to servanthood in his name?*
- *Would you say that forgiving others is a form of sacrifice? Why or why not?*