

Sunday Message

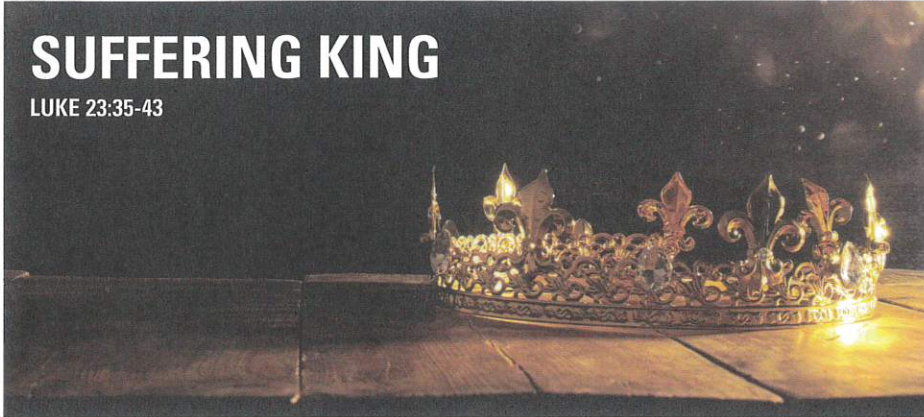
Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

THE WORD

Year C • 20 November 2022 • Psalter Week 2

SUFFERING KING

LUKE 23:35-43



One of the most popular books and TV series of modern times is *Game of Thrones*. With a magnificent plot and glorious cinematography, the drama has all the elements fans seem to love – greed, ambition, lust, brutality, power struggles, betrayal, intrigue. “Game” is an appropriate word for its title, for there are power games aplenty, games of thrones.

Humanity has always been fascinated by royalty. Think of the popularity of the Netflix series *The Crown*, or people’s obsession with the British royal family.

In times past, kings and queens were closer to the image portrayed on *Games of Thrones* than the royal houses of today. Absolute monarchs ruled by decree. They commanded respect, fear, obedience. They fought battles and conquered territory and lorded it over their subjects. They got rid of anyone who got in their way. Their wealth and power afforded them the luxury and lifestyle their subjects could only dream of.

Thankfully, this isn’t the case any more (at least in the West), so we can find it hard to understand why we celebrate a feast of Christ as king. The Jesus of the Gospels, the carpenter’s boy from Nazareth, doesn’t fit our image of a monarch. It’s essential, then, to remember how and why this feast came about.

Pope Pius XI inaugurated it in 1925 during a time of increasing political turmoil. The Blackshirts under Mussolini were in power in Italy. A demagogue called Adolf Hitler was organising the Nazi Party in Germany. In Moscow, Josef Stalin was ruthlessly consolidating his control of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The world was tumbling toward the Great Depression, and populism and militant nationalism were on the rise. In creating this feast, Pope Pius was declaring to the world that despite dictatorships and economic collapse and the false values of the time, Jesus Christ remained King of the Universe and a model for how authority should be exercised.

Pius XI was declaring that in a world filled with division, conflict and tears, Christ the King offers both the ideal example and an uncomfortable model of behaviour. He is the model for how authority should be exercised. He is the model for how people should relate to one another.

The kingship of Jesus turns our commonly accepted notions of royalty on their head. His crown symbolises his majesty, made not of gold but thorns. He rules not by threat or decree but by a moral authority, a message of love. He is interested not in possessions, money or status but mercy, compassion and justice. Our king rules by washing feet.

In the midst of the humiliation of the cross, today’s Gospel account paints a picture of someone every inch a king. Jesus pardons his executioners; he bestows the gift of the kingdom on someone who has done little to merit it until that moment. In the act of dying, he calmly resigns his Spirit into the hands of God. ■

PRAY

Pray for our leaders of Church and State, that what they do and how they live will reflect kingdom values of service, humility and love.

DO

Think about your values. How closely do they reflect the values of the kingdom?

REFLECT

Jesus’ model of authority is what Pope Francis seeks to demonstrate. It has been a hallmark of his papacy since the night he first appeared on the balcony in St Peter’s almost a decade ago. People noticed it straight away – how he wore only the simple white cassock and black shoes, how he refused to live in the spacious papal apartments, how he shuns ostentation and has kept the focus on simplicity. They noted how his first trip outside Italy was not to visit a head of state or major shrine but to a Mediterranean island swamped with refugees.

Pope Francis’ message is clear – we must imitate Jesus by living as simply and humbly as possible. Whatever our rank in society or the Church, we must never lord it over anyone. Our model must always be Christ, the servant king.

This is a tough ask because it runs counter to the values of today, which are about celebrity and wealth and power. To be a follower of the servant king is to live a life at odds with the prevailing culture. It is to be a counter-witness.

The feast of Christ the King also has a new urgency today, with right-wing populism again on the rise and narrow tribalism dominating so much of politics. It reminds us that God’s kingdom is different from any earthly kingdom, and its values are different. As Christians, we are called to worship Jesus Christ as our king and imitate his way of living. ■

LEARN

The kingdom of God is based not on power, wealth and military might but justice, peace and love.

The followers of Jesus live by the values of his kingdom.

When we reach out in love and compassion to those who are lost and forsaken, those in prison, sick, homeless, we are living by the values of the kingdom.

SAY

Lord Jesus, you are my master and my king. Help me to follow your example to the best of my ability. Amen.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

How worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and divinity,
and wisdom and strength and honour.
To him belong glory and power for ever and
ever.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

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,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 5:1-3

A reading from the second book of Samuel.
All the tribes of Israel came to David at
Hebron. "Look" they said "we are your own
flesh and blood. In days past when Saul was
our king, it was you who led Israel in all their
exploits; and the Lord said to you, 'You are
the man who shall be shepherd of my people
Israel, you shall be the leader of Israel.'" So
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 the Lord,
and they anointed David king of Israel.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 121

Response:

I rejoiced when I heard them say:
"Let us go to God's house."

- I rejoiced when I heard them say:
"Let us go to God's house."
And now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem. (R.)
- Jerusalem is built as a city
strongly compact.
It is there that the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord. (R.)

- For Israel's law it is,
there to praise the Lord's name.
There were set the thrones of judgement
of the house of David. (R.)

SECOND READING Colossians 1:12-20

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Colossians.

We give thanks to the Father who has made
it possible for you to join the saints and with
them to inherit the light.

Because 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, and in him, we gain our
freedom, the forgiveness of our sins.

He is the image of the unseen God
and the first-born of all creation,
for 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.

Before anything was created, he existed,
and he holds all things in unity.

Now 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;
because God wanted all perfection
to be found in him
and 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.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Blessings on him who comes in the name of
the Lord!

Blessings on the coming kingdom of our
father David!

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 23:35-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Luke.

The people stayed there before the cross
watching Jesus. 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." The soldiers mocked
him too, and when they approached to offer
him vinegar they said, "If you are the king of
the Jews, save yourself." Above him there
was an inscription: "This is the King of the
Jews."

One of the criminals hanging there abused
him. "Are you not the Christ?" he said.
"Save yourself and us as well." But 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, but in our case
we deserved it: we are paying for what we
did. But this man has done nothing wrong.
Jesus," he said "remember me when you
come into your kingdom." "Indeed, I promise

you," he replied "today you will be with me
in paradise."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice
by which the human race is reconciled to you,
we humbly pray
that your Son himself may bestow on all
nations
the gifts of unity and peace.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord sits as King for ever.
The Lord will bless his people with peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the food of immortality,
we ask, O Lord,
that, glorying in obedience
to the commands of Christ, the King of the
universe,
we may live with him eternally in his
heavenly Kingdom.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.