



Feast of Christ the King

Last Sunday in Pentecost – November 24, 2019

Proper 26 – Year “C”

Luke 23: 33-43

“Dimas’ Thanksgiving Gift”

Good Morning, Blessed Ones and welcome.

On this day, this Sunday, the “First Day of the New Week” is actually the last Sunday and the last week of what, in the Episcopal Church we call the... Liturgical Cycle or the Church Year. Today marks the conclusion of our post-Pentecost season also known in the Church vernacular as “Ordinary Time” or “the Green Season.” It has been 24 Sundays since we celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday 2019 on June 9th. Today also concludes the 3rd and final segment of our Scriptural

Journey... as Lectionary Year "C" comes to a dramatic conclusion with today's Gospel Story from Luke. Scripture and the reading of our Sacred Stories plays a huge part in our Episcopal tradition as it was and remains one of the structural components of our Episcopal faith... our Via Media or the Middle Way. Scripture - Tradition - Reason... all foundational and structural members of the Jesus Movement, lived out in the Episcopal Tradition. Sacred Scripture is such an important and basic component of our Faith, that the Episcopal lectionary crafters want to make sure we get to hear it all. So, we take three years and divide the New Testament into three parts. Year A-B-C. Next Sunday we begin the lectionary circle again with Year "A" and the Gospel of Matthew. So this Sunday is not a beginning or an end but simply yet another transition around the Circle, the Circle of Life, the Liturgical Circle. Our personal and communal journey to "The Sacred".

In addition, this week in our communities we celebrate Thanksgiving. A time to pause, gather, re-connect, as individuals, families and communities to remember, identify and thank Creator for our vast array of Blessings presented to

us. For me personally, this is always a wonderful time as Miss Mona and I commemorate the anniversary of our Wedding 36 years ago on November 26, 1983.

In what may at first seem a bit odd, in the Church Year today is the Feast Day, the Day of Celebration of "Christ the King".... This seems oddly antiquated doesn't it. Unless you are a committed Anglophile, loving all things British, or perhaps Danish or Swedish, the idea of a Monarch seems very dated and old worldly to most modern Christians. What traits are actually being implied when we speak about Jesus as Monarch? And did Jesus ever think or see himself in such a role?

Monarchs... Kings and Queens; ordained from birth because of a "royal lineage" recognized and tracing back for generations, a stature it is claimed, given to the Royal Family by God. Monarchs, having ultimate authority over the decisions and directions of their Kingdoms. Dictating laws and commands, the ultimate moral, legal and social authority within the jurisdiction over which the Monarch presides. Is that "our Jesus?" Is that how Jesus saw himself? Or, over

time, is that how Christians came to understand the sacredness of Jesus walk. It took Christians over 300 years to make that theological journey from Jesus to Christ. The recognition of Jesus as the “anointed one” – The Greek word “christos” and the Hebrew word, Mashiach or as we know it Messiah. The deification of the Jewish carpenter’s son, social revolutionary, teacher and folk theologian was a journey that took Christianity over 300 years. The Church makes that journey symbolically each church year which begins with the First Sunday of Advent preparing for the Blessed One’s birth as a humble Jewish baby and concluding today... celebrating Jesus as deity, monarch and savior.

So what are we thankful for? Today as we sit together quietly in this place. Old friends and new acquaintances, families that have perhaps spent a lifetime together and others whom have know one another for just minutes. There is a message for us in today’s Gospel from Luke.

It seems a bit strange at first to be speaking about Jesus’ crucifixion and death, 4 days before Thanksgiving and 4 weeks before Christmas. Wouldn’t this Gospel story be

more appropriately placed in Lent or Holy Week? What's the deal? I believe that we conclude the Liturgical Year with this particular story because for me it is the ultimate story of and lesson about HOPE! And absolutely nothing is more important at the advent of a New Year than HOPE!

Let's have a look at this story and you can help me find the hope. It's like a puzzle... like Where's Waldo? Where's the Hope?

In today's Gospel we already fast forward through Good Friday to find Jesus on the Cross well into the executional agony that is crucifixion... gradual death by exhaustion and asphyxia. Jesus first words from the Cross shouldn't be a surprise for us... but would have astonished the 1st century observers of the event on Golgotha... The Skull. Jesus' first words are words of forgiveness... gentle words of compassion and reconciliation... "Father, please forgive them for they do not know what they are doing..." Then they gambled for Jesus' clothing, mocked Jesus calling him the Messiah... in jeering jest and in what they thought was the ultimate irony put a sign on the Cross... Jesus of Nazareth... King of the Jews.

If they only knew... Jesus not the worldly king that all were expecting and some still expect... but instead a Spiritual leader, social leader, ethical leader, moral leader...in that sense...yes – very much a King.

Next we hear the story of the two thieves crucified with Jesus, each very different in the telling of their stories.

The first thief can only think of now... the present and saving and extending what is left of his swiftly retreating life. He cries... if you are the Messiah save yourself and us. IF you are the Messiah.

IF... no faith, no hope, simply a wild cry on the Skull Mountain for a longer life on earth. Thief number 1 named Gestas... a Greek name. Interestingly translated as “the moaner” or “one who whines...” Compare and contrast to

Thief #2. Dismas/Dimas....Dimas’ first words recognize Jesus as “The Sacred”... Dimas chastises the first thief....”

Do you not fear God? Then after recognizing and naming Jesus as the Sacred, states the thief’ s own guilt and recognized Jesus’ own innocence. Dimas says... “We deserve to be here, but He has done nothing!” Then in 9 short words that forever secure both Dimas’s place in history

and in the Spirit World....Dimas says, "Jesus remember me, when you come into your Kingdom." The ultimate pronouncement of Faith, and of Hope. Dimas dying declaration of belief....belief in the Child of Bethlehem, belief in the godliness of the Carpenter's Son, Belief in Jesus the teacher and social revolutionary, and yes belief in Jesus in spiritual leadership. Faith and Hope....Dimas' legacy... I believe, take me with you..."

And Blessed Ones, Dimas' legacy is ours as well. This Thanksgiving as we remember all of the myriad of Creator's gifts to us, let us remember Dimas's Gift to us. Dimas' teaching us to say YES! Dimas recognizing and sharing in Jesus Sacred Presence. Dimas demonstrating God within us. Dimas showing us how to navigate spiritual change in a sacred, authentic and agile way. And finally the gift of Dimas for showing us how to recognize and instinctively understand our intimate and personal connection to the Holy.

Reaching out in deep faith, hopefully and confidently we too say... "Jesus remember me when you come into your

Kingdom.” And the Sacred One, Sacred Child and
Blessed King replies...” Today you are with me in Paradise!”

Amen