

Sunday Sermon: November 24, 2019

Sermon Theme: This King Does What No One Else Does

Sermon Text: Luke 23:43-53

<sup>35</sup> The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

<sup>36</sup> The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar <sup>37</sup> and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

<sup>38</sup> There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

<sup>40</sup> **But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."**

<sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

<sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Many times when I make supper, I have the TV on in the background. The other night I was running a little late as I was making supper the show changed from whatever was on to the news. As the news ran, the commercials changed from advertisements to political ads.

All these candidates were making promises about all the things that they will fight for and what they will accomplish if I would just give them my vote.

This could be very important information for me, but I have to admit that I tuned most of it out and I even turned the channel. Why is that we don't trust those people who are making those promises?

We probably don't trust them because the track record of candidates for keeping those promises just isn't all that good. It's hard to find a candidate who has a good track record when it comes to the promises they make.

It may be hard to find a candidate who does what he promises to do. However, we do have someone whose promises never change, who has the power to make sure that those promises are kept. We have a King who does what no one else does. He makes us promises and he keeps those promises.

Today is Christ the King Sunday. When you hear Jesus called the King, what Bible stories jump into your mind that show him as the King? Maybe you might have one of the miracles in mind. Maybe the feeding of the 5000 where he fed a huge crowd of people with just a little food. Maybe it is one of the times that he raised someone from the dead. Only someone with power can do that. Maybe it is Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday where he was actually treated as a king with palm branches waiving and praises being sung in his honor.

We think of a king in earthly terms with thrones, banners, armies, pomp and circumstance. We think of the king that sits on his throne and judges and rules. This is part of Jesus' kingship. In our second lesson, we heard that Jesus is strong and powerful. He is the image of the invisible God, firstborn over all creation. He is the creator and all things are under his feet. Jesus rules over everything in perfect justice and love.

Yet, the leadership of Jesus is so much more than his ruling. Jesus leadership is shown in his promises. Much like the politicians want us to hear their promises and follow them, Jesus has made us some unbelievable promises that he wants us to hear, believe and follow.

Jesus has promised us that he will take care of our every need here on earth. Many times candidates make similar promises. They promise to make our lives easier, to get us jobs, to put money in our pockets. But many times they simply can't make our lives better.

When Jesus says he takes care of every need, he is different, because he has the power to do what he says he will do. When Jesus makes this promise, his eternal power is behind it. Jesus not only has the power, but he also loves us too much to make an empty promise like this.

Yet, sometimes we treat Jesus like a politician and we doubt his promises to us. We doubt that he is actually making sure that our lives are better. We see problems and trouble in our life that are often brought about by sin and blame God that he hasn't been better to us. Sin tries to have us focus on only the bad things that happen. Sin wants us to get lost in our troubles and trials so that we doubt God.

The more sin clouds our understanding, the less we see what a wonderful King we have and how he is carrying out his promise. Sometimes, we simply don't have the faith it takes to count our blessings and not our problems. Sometimes our faith is so weak that we don't see the hand of God in showering us with his many blessings. Sometimes our own doubt and worry blind us to the goodness of God in keeping us from having consequences to our sins that are far worse than what we are going through right now.

Jesus makes us the promise that he will take care of us and he shows us that we can trust him. The many miracles that Jesus did showed that he cared about the sick, the young and old, the troubled, even those who were afraid. We see Jesus performing all kinds of miracles, but the reason was the same: he loved the people and wanted to provide something that they truly needed. Jesus used his power and continues to use that power to bring us the blessings that we need to make it through this life to the rest he has promised.

Politicians only make promises to certain people. Maybe it is their constituents because they are the ones voting. Maybe it is the people that are like-minded. When a politician makes a promise, there is always someone that they are leaving out of the promise. Someone that they do not intend to be part of their promise.

Jesus greatest promise of love was not one that is about our life of earth, but is about our eternal life in heaven. Jesus is so different because he makes his promises to all people. He doesn't leave anyone out. That greatest promise is one that we see in our sermon text. **"Today, you will be with me in paradise."**

Of all the stories that make us think about Jesus as a King, one that probably didn't come to mind is Jesus crucifixion. Yet, it is the picture of what a King should do for his people. A king should be ready to lay down his life for his people.

That is what Jesus did. He did not send us into battle to fight sin, death and the devil. Instead of sending us into battle, Jesus offered himself. He went into battle, knowing that the cost would be his life. Instead of trying to find a way to avoid the battle, he walked into the hands of his enemies and he willingly offered himself.

As we look at Jesus on the cross it does not look like a victorious king returning from battle. He is not in shining armor mounted on a white horse. Yet, his suffering and dying is the victory and the fulfillment of his biggest promise.

Jesus makes us the promise of heaven in so many places, **"I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."** **"I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me."** **"Today, you will be with me in paradise."**

Jesus promise is that he is the key that opens the gates heaven. Jesus promise is, for those who believe, the gates of heaven are not shut and locked, by his suffering and death, he has opened the gates of heaven. They are standing open waiting for the time that we will enter.

This is a big promise. It would be easy to be skeptical of the promise. Yet, Jesus showed us that he has kept his promise by rising from the dead. Death could not hold him because the king was victorious. The victory won, the gates of heaven opened.

As the thief hung on the cross that day with Jesus, he knew something was different about this man who was hanging next to him. Maybe he had heard about Jesus, maybe he had just seen his example and heard his words. Whatever the case may be, he understood that the man who was next to him was the true King of heaven.

When he realized this he made a simple request, **"Remember me, when you come into your kingdom."** Notice the humility and repentance in this man's statement. There was no more mockery in his words, there was no more unbelief. In that simple faith, he didn't ask Jesus for much, only to remember him.

Jesus gave him more than he asked for. He gave him the eternal blessing and assurance of a life with him forever. **Today you will be with me in paradise.**

Jesus gives us the same assurance, the same promise, today. Many times when those politicians get into office the promises change. Either the promises are thrown or they are disregarded. Many times the politicians will give reasons. They will say that they can no longer stand by that promise because they are better informed now, they have new information, or times have changed. They try to make us believe that the old promises were misinformed or bad and that the new ones are much better.

Unlike politicians, our King and his promises never change. Jesus doesn't have a better plan that will get us to heaven because his plan to win the victory and give us heaven is already perfect. Jesus hasn't found

out some new information about us that would make us unworthy, he already knows the sins of our hearts and minds and he forgives us anyway. There are no changes in society that can move Jesus from his promises to watch over us, protect us and bring us to our heavenly home.

Our king is unlike any other leader that we will know on earth. He does things that the others don't. He makes promises for all, promises that never change. But more than that Jesus has kept his promises to us. He has taken away our sins and heaven is ours. As we prepare our hearts and minds for Jesus to come at Christmas, let's be ready to praise and thank our King for the promises he has made and kept for us.