

“In Him All”
Luke 23:33-43, Colossians 1:11-20
Rev. Sumarme Goble
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Wow! that was beautiful. That helped me and I know all of us worship God even more today. Thank you so much Mary.

Let us pray.

Oh God! May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, Oh God! Our rock and our Redeemer. Amen!

We stand at the end of the year that is the Christian year. Next Sunday will mark New Year's Day for us and it will be the beginning of the advent season and it sounds like there are so many wonderful things here planned in anticipation of the coming of Christ to us. So as the church we are looking ahead to a wonderful season of joyful anticipation, and yet we're also looking back. You know how it is at the end of the year news, articles, and photograph collections of bound as writers and photographers do what they can to encapsulate the past years events.

I enjoy looking at the year in pictures. Issue that time 'Life magazine' puts out each year depicting the joys and challenges of living life in this world. Some of us might also read stories of false prophets 'AKA', some of the world's leaders maybe psychics or other forecasters as they predict what will occur in the year ahead. As Christians though, when we look back we're looking at the enthronement of Jesus as the Christ the Messiah. At the same time we're looking ahead we're looking forward to his Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, words we pray every Sunday morning.

Today preachers who follow the lectionary and the Christian calendar will point to the theme of today which is Christ the King Christ is king over all Christ reigns supreme an in him all things hold together. Did you notice how many times we heard the word all the

words 'all things' and an 'in him all' in the Colossians passage. Listen verse 16, "for in him all things on heaven and in earth were created. Verse 17, "in him all things hold together". Verse 19, "for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell". And the word 'All' is mentioned seven times in five verses.

For Paul the mind of God which stretches to the far reaches of the universe is imagined most completely in the person of Jesus Christ who lived on earth at a specific time in history. For Paul the person and work of Jesus is so decisive, so all-encompassing that not only you and I are different people because of it, not only has our world in human history been changed forever because of it, but the entire universe has been transformed because of it. So when Paul writes the words, 'all things' he means it. He means everything. It may seem a little confusing to compare this text from Colossians with the one from Luke 23, because in Luke's gospel at this point in the story it doesn't look like God like Christ is reigning over all things. It looks like just the opposite, he was hanging on a cross between two thieves condemned as a criminal.

Jesus was killed just as he lived in the company of sinners. The execution of the image of the invisible God, but one in whom all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell looks like sheer folly to reasonable people who were unaware of the scandal of it all. These days we are used to seeing Christian crosses everywhere. An ancient means of torture the cross has become jewelry, a graphic on a T-shirt, or a branding logo for the church. I remember Ed Searcy the minister at 'University Hill' congregation on the UBC campus saying that, the cross no longer carries the voltage of an electric chair or the tightness of a hang man's loose noose and well perhaps in part it's because we rarely tell the story of Good Friday except on Good Friday. But today on reign of Christ Sunday the story appears again. There on the cross two sinners hang one on Jesus right and one on his left. And it wasn't long before that in Luke's gospel that James and John were vying for places on Jesus right and left hand. Hey! they wanted to be right and left of him in his Kingdom. But look, who is on his right and left now? Two convicts.

The Jewish religious establishment considered Jesus a criminal. They believe that Jesus blasphemed the holy name of God and implied that he himself was God. The Romans considered Jesus a criminal because he was a threat to see Caesar and his sovereign control over Rome. To the soldiers Jesus was fostering in uprising against Rome and by putting Jesus to death they were teaching everyone that they would end up on a cross too if they started a rebellion and tried to take control. Well we do want control too, maybe not over our own nation but over our own lives and over who and what we consider to be most important. Be at money, wealth, power, status. For some people it might be uncomfortable to sing songs about Jesus being Lord and master who reigns over all things because they already hold something else most dear.

One thief on the cross next to Jesus wanted him to take control to save himself and get them off the cross too, that is if he really was king. Three times in Luke 23 Jesus hears the word, 'save yourself' or 'save yourself and us'. Jesus hears it from the religious leaders, the soldiers and one of the two thieves on the cross. Each one mocked Jesus saying, if he was really king he would show power as God and king and save himself.

Doesn't this remind you of Jesus' temptation in the desert, at the beginning of Jesus ministry when the devil tempts him three times saying, if you are really the son of God turn the stone into bread, don't worship God, throw yourself down from the temple and let the angels rescue you. The devil tempts Jesus to save himself that by following methods that were trends in the world both then and now. Namely power, might, and control. But Jesus didn't give in to temptation and saved himself, and so he died. His followers were devastated and his enemies said.

Ha! I told you so he is no king or God over anything. Jesus the word made flesh this image perfectly reveals the invisible God did not come down from the cross so that he could fully identify with our humanness in all its pain, suffering, and death. In Colossians 1: verse 20, scripture says that God reconciled us to God's self by making lasting peace through the blood of Christ Cross. Jesus willingly absorbed evil and took it upon himself for your sake and mine. You know I've gone to seminary and I've studied it myself and

it's still hard to grasp in my mind how Jesus won for us salvation, forgiveness, and life through his sacrifice and death.

At the start of the service we sang to Him 'Lord you are both lamb and shepherd', and while we were singing it maybe you wondered how Christ reign of peace and victory could be true. Though we know it deep down by the gift of faith sometimes we just have to sit in awe with the mystery of it all. I already mentioned the criminal on one side of Jesus who mocked him saying save yourself, but on the other side of Jesus was a criminal who saw Jesus differently. He saw that those suffering and dying, Jesus had the power to save him and so he humbly asked, "Jesus Remember Me when you come into your Kingdom" "Remember Me". This thief confessed his guilt to Jesus admitting that he was only getting what he deserved while Jesus had done nothing wrong. Jesus replied to him "truly, today you will be with me in paradise, I will remember you".

This is the answer every one of us wants to hear when we long for God's mercy and help. This is the answer Jesus gives to anyone who comes to him wanting to be rescued, knowing they cannot possibly save themselves. Jesus offers each one His mercy and presence. Jesus did not save himself so that he could save all who call upon him. Jesus lived out his own teaching that those who lose their lives will find it. We know the rest of the story now that Jesus made it through death and beyond. He was raised to new life by God some people on the hill called mount Calvary, judge Jesus on earthly terms to be the lowest of the low, the worst criminal. But God judged his son Jesus with Kingdom eyes, as the highest of the high, as the name above all names. The all powerful God was revealed in Jesus as a King who humbly emptied himself of the power to save himself he's a peculiar king who rules in strange and mysterious ways. The one who accepts the lost and the least into his Kingdom, when they recognize him as Lord and Saviour. No matter how low in society, in status by societies opinion, God is able to reach each one of us and bring us home to God.

This past week I was reintroduced to this quote by Frederick Bueckner a theologian and writer who died this past June I believe at 96 years old. He writes there is no place

where we can hide from God, no place where we are exempt from his power to break into and recreate the human heart. Because it is where he seems most helpless like on the cross that he is most strong and just where we least expect him that he comes most fully.

The thief on the cross did not expect Jesus to enter into his dire situation, but Jesus did and gave him hope, peace, and salvation. That one lone thief was the first one to follow Christ into God's Kingdom. That thief one of the lowest people in society, a criminal whose crime was punishable by death, was first to put his faith in Christ Jesus and enter God's Kingdom. And by holding faith in Christ Jesus we too belong to that Kingdom by faith, not because of the good things we do, not because of our solid character and the merits of our virtue, we have been given an eternal place in God's Kingdom because we have asked Jesus to be merciful to us, to remember us. In him all things are held together when we feel life's troubles are tearing us apart.

Jesus is with you and remembers you. Calling Christ Jesus our Saviour and Lord means we are willing to place all the demanding, broken, and disconnected parts of our lives into God's hands. And as the apostle Paul claims, only in Him, do all things hold together, but they hold together more readily when we place them when we place him before all things and make him the centre of our lives.

May Christ reign as King and Lord of all, in your life and mine.

Let us pray!

With your only son and the Holy Spirit you are God humble and powerful you are God merciful and peacemaking. You are God holy and worthy of honour. Thank you for your son Jesus who loved us with a love stronger than death. Thank you that he did not come down from the cross to save himself but rather through his suffering and death he brought us all mercy, healing, and forgiveness.

We are forever grateful and we humbly bow before you in wonder and awe for you are indeed, Lord of all. Amen!