

0166a Feast of Christ the King Year C 2025

‘This day you will be with me in paradise’

Throughout this year, we have been listening to the Gospel of Luke in our Sunday Gospels.

Nest Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, we will begin a new liturgical year in which we will be listening mainly to the Gospel of Matthew.

And the Gospel we have just heard is a fitting conclusion to our reading of the Gospel of Luke because it captures one of the main themes of Luke’s Gospel – forgiveness.

The Gospel of Luke has been called ‘the Gospel of Great Pardons’ because it contains several unique stories that focus on the mercy and forgiveness of God.

We have the story of the woman who was a great sinner in chapter 7 who pours ointment on Jesus’ feet and washes them with her tears. In response Jesus says, ‘I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her or she would not have shown such great love.’ (Luke 7:47)

Also, in Luke we have the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector, to whom Jesus says, ‘hurry, come down, Zachhaeus, for I must stay at your house today’. (Luke 19:5)

And of course, in Luke we have the famous parable of the Prodigal Son, whom the Father welcomes back lovingly although the son has behaved so badly and has brought great shame on the family. (Luke 15:11-32)

And this Gospel of Great Forgiveness reaches its culmination at Calvary. From the cross, Jesus looks out on those who have crucified him and prays, ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do.’ (Luke 23:34).

And then we come to the moment recorded in today’s Gospel where Jesus is being crucified between two criminals. One jeers at him, but the other says, ‘Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.’ And Jesus gives the magnificent reply, ‘Indeed, I promise you, this day you will be with me in paradise.’

It is very appropriate that we reflect on the mercy of God this year on the feast of Christ the King, because we are in a Jubilee Year. As we know, Jubilee Years are special years of remission of sin, forgiveness of debts and universal pardon. The theme of the Year is 'Pilgrims of Hope', and our great hope is in the mercy of God.

As Pope Francis wrote, 'Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: "For if, while we were still God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"' (*Rom 5:10*).

I invite you now to gaze upon Christ the King on his throne, which is a cross, and quietly say to him, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom', and hear him say to you, 'Indeed I promise you: one day you will be with me in paradise.'

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