

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

2 Samuel 5:1-3

King Saul was told by the prophet Samuel to wait for him to offer sacrifice. He grew impatient and offered the sacrifice himself. He thereby intruded into the priestly office and lost the approval of God. He continued to rule but lost the right of dynastic succession, which meant that he would not have his son rule after him. Then Saul was told to kill all the Amalakites but he spared the king and the best livestock. For this God rejected Saul as king.....In 1 Samuel 16, the prophet Samuel anointed the young David to be king at some future time. In 2 Samuel 2, after the death of King Saul and his sons, David was anointed by members of his tribe of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, to be their king. In today's reading, David is accepted as king of all the tribes.¹

¹In those days, all the tribes of Israel (The North) came to David in Hebron (The South) and said: "Here we are, your bone and your flesh. This is a statement of solidarity saying that the king represents the whole people. But, there is also a clear resonance between these words and the words of Adam when he beheld his bride Eve in Genesis 2:23, "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." In becoming King of Israel, David likewise weds Israel in the symbolic marital covenant. All this points to the eventual marriage between Christ the King and the new Israel, His bride, the Church. Jesus is frequently referred to as the Bridegroom in the New Testament.¹³

²In days past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back. And the Lord said to you, "You shall shepherd my people Israel and shall be commander of Israel." This recalls the moment when God intervened to anoint David and it also recalls the true nature of a king for God's people: he must be one to shepherd the flock.¹

³When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, King David made an agreement with them there before the Lord, and they anointed him king of Israel.

Jesus was born of the lineage of David. Just as David was chosen by God to be king over the whole people Israel (formerly divided but now unified under him), so Jesus was chosen by God to bring all nations together under divine sovereignty. David is shepherd, king, and priest (at least in the sense of being a mediator between God and Israel). Jesus too is shepherd, king, and priest.²

Colossians 1:12-20

This letter was written by Paul from prison sometime between 61 and 63AD. Colossae was an important city in Turkey but all that is left now are ruins. The letter to the Colossians was a response to the teachings that certain angelic beings had control over human affairs, and even over all creation. Paul had to confront these errors vigorously and point out clearly Christ's unique place and all-powerful cosmic role in the universe.⁸

Brothers and sisters:

¹²Let us give thanks to the father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance We do not merely celebrate Christ's Kingship today, but the place he has given us at court.¹³ of the holy ones in light. Our sharing in "the inheritance of the saints" enables us to draw on the treasury of spiritual goods which the Church is continually applying to its members—prayers, sacrifices and all kinds of meritorious actions, which benefit every Christian.⁵ We add to this treasury through the Morning Offering.

13He delivered us from the power of darkness The condition of enslavement to the devil by a person in the state of sin.⁵ and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, This verse vigorously affirms one of the most striking aspects of Christ's Kingship: it constitutes a liberation! Christ the King is the Liberator of man. He offers us freedom from sin, error and ignorance.⁴

14in whom we have redemption, The CCC explains that Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of Christ's cross but this mystery is at work throughout his entire life: --in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty; --in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience; --in his word which purifies its hearers; in his healings and exorcisms by which "he took our infirmities and bore our diseases"; and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us.⁶ the forgiveness of sins.

15He is the image of the invisible God, Christ manifests God's presence in his person.⁷ the firstborn of all creation. Christ existed before all creation and is highest among all creatures.⁷

16For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; These are different levels or choirs of angels and all of them, irrespective of their hierarchy, come under the authority of Christ.⁵ all things were created through him and for him. Even these invisible angelic beings, who were thought to control the world, were made by Jesus Christ and for his purposes.⁸

17He is before all things, Christ existed before all other things and he is also the most important⁸ and in him all things hold together. It is through his continuing creative power that creation itself continues on and it is all under his control.⁷

18He is the head of the body, While "head" signifies authority, here it also has a secondary meaning as a source of life and growth which comes from the Greek concept of the relation of the head to the human body.⁸ the church. In this instance the church is a universal entity and not just a local community. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, Christ was the first man to rise from the dead never again to die and his own resurrection is the cause of the resurrection of all those who follow him.⁸ that in all things he himself might be preeminent.

19For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, The fullness of God—his presence, divinity, and wisdom—is in Christ who shares this with the Church, which in turn affects all humanity.⁸

20and through him to reconcile all things Using the word "all" eight times shows the cosmic dimension of Christ's power.⁷ for him, making peace by the blood of his cross This incongruity caught their attention! through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven. On this feast-day we proclaim Christ as head of the church and ruler of the universe.

Luke 23:35-43

Jesus is not presented as a royal personage arrayed in the finery of this world, but rather, one acclaimed to be king by the sign over his head on the throne of a wooden cross.⁵ While he is truly the Chosen One, the Messiah of God, the King of Jews, in today's Gospel we hear these names on the lips of those who don't believe in him—Israel's rulers, the soldiers, a criminal dying alongside him.¹²

35The rulers sneered at Jesus Luke clearly distinguishes the people who stood silently looking on from the rulers who kept sneering at Jesus. and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God."

36Even the soldiers jeered at him. The rulers were Jewish and the soldiers were Gentiles and they both mocked Jesus and made his Passion more bitter.¹¹ As they approached to offer him

wine This was not the drugged wine that is offered in Matthew. This was the common wine of the soldiers. It was sour and some translations call it vinegar.¹⁰ they called out,

³⁷“If you are King of the Jews, save yourself.”

³⁸Above him there was an inscription that read, “This is the King of the Jews.” According to Roman practice, criminals displayed a sign inscribed with the charges brought against them. Jesus’ placard was written in three languages (Hebrew, Latin and Greek).⁹ It is interesting that Pilot placed this charge after he had declared that Jesus was not guilty of it. Three reasons suggest themselves: a) to protect himself from the later charge that he had merely given way to a mob’s desire; b) to mock Jesus in order to please the Jewish leadership; c) to provide a warning against any other would-be revolutionaries against the empire.¹⁰

³⁹Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.” This man is thinking only of physical survival.

⁴⁰The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? This has two levels of meaning: they are all three suffering under the same sentence of death but at the same time they are all three under God’s judgment as they face death.

⁴¹And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.” This is now the fourth declaration of Jesus’ innocence (cf. 23:13-23).¹⁰

⁴²Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” The “Good Thief” is actually saved--by his faith... The use of the personal name “Jesus” is striking as it is used in Luke only by demoniacs or others seeking healing. The name itself means “the Lord saves.”¹⁰ Escriva wrote: Many times have I repeated the words of the Good Thief and it always fills me with emotion: to ask like the penitent thief did! He recognized that he himself deserved that awful punishment... and with a word he stole Christ’s heart and the gates of heaven were opened up for him!¹¹

⁴³He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Jesus’ reply, his last words to any person on earth, puts the emphasis upon “today” –before the sun sets.⁸ The New Testament speaks of judgment in the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, (the final judgment: heaven or hell) but it also affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith (the particular judgment: heaven, purgatory or hell).⁶ St. John Chrysostom comments that “Among men, confession is followed by punishment whereas confession to God is followed by salvation.”¹¹

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) “Workbook For Lectors and Gospel Readers: 1998” by Lawrence E. Mick, (2) “Workbook For Lectors and Gospel Readers: 1995” by Aelred Rosser, (3) “A Celebrants Guide to the New Sacramentary Cycle C” by Kevin W. Irwin, (4) “Saint Joseph Commentary On The Sunday Readings: Year C” by Achille Degeest, O.F.M., (5) “The Navarre Bible: Captivity Epistles,” (6) “Catechism of the Catholic Church, (7) “The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Colossians” by Ivan Havener, O.S.B., (8) “The Jerome Biblical Commentary,” (9) “Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke,” (10) “The Gospel of Luke” by Luke Timothy Johnson, and (11) “The Navarre Bible: St. Luke.” (12) “The St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology: Breaking the Bread” and (13) “The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst.”

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.