

Midweek Lent 6 Sermon
“A theology of glory (superscription)” (Luke 23:38)
March 20, 2024
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 6th Lenten Wednesday is Luke 23:38.

**“38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew:
THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”**

So far the text...

Four letters can be the cause of much hate, much violence, and even death. No I'm not talking about 4 letter words that begin with “d” or “h” that can be used as vulgarity... and certainly the 4 letter words that begin with “s” or “f” are vulgar. No, the four letters that caused much hate, violence, and finally death to the God-Man, Jesus were I-N-R-I. This was the superscription above Jesus' head on the cross that Pilate made sure was exactly as he wanted it.

Letters were written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, the languages of the day. We are most familiar with the Greek I-N-R-I which are the first letters for the words Jesus Nazareth King Jews – Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.

Now you may have caught that our reading from Luke doesn't say those exact words, but rather “This is the King of the Jews”. The exact wording we find in John 19:19, which the Jews by the way, objected to because they wanted to write

“He said, “I am the King of the Jews.” ’ ”

22 Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

Why the difference? And if we look at Mark 15:26, it's reads differently again.

**“26 And the inscription of His accusation was written above:
THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

Matthew 27:37 reads a little differently as well.

**“37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him:
THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

So what gives? Some have seized on these differences to argue that the Bible is therefore not inerrant, that it has mistakes. The only mistake, and it is a grave one, is to not believe that Jesus

of Nazareth is the King of the Jews...and also the King of the Gentiles, that is, King of all believers, of Israel, God's people – His church.

An explanation as to why there are differences most likely lies in what each of the Gospel writers wanted to emphasize. For you see in Matthew and Mark, we have an explanation added which our text from Luke doesn't include. "The accusation written against Him:" What accusation? That Jesus is from Nazareth? Or even that His name is Jesus? No that is not what the Jews accused Him of and would not accept anything less than death.

No, what the Jews accused Jesus of, what really stuck in their craw...just couldn't get it out of their teeth...and caused them much indignation was that Jesus did not deny that He was the King of the Jews. And Pilate pushed some more buttons when he told the Jews,

"And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

15 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!"

Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?"

The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"

"Your King", they didn't want anything to do with Jesus. They did not want to believe that Jesus was the King prophesized in Zechariah 9:9 – which was fulfilled on Palm Sunday, which we celebrate this Sunday.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”

There was no rejoicing, just cries of "Crucify Him". But by those very cries was our salvation won by the Just Man – the King Jesus! He humbly came because all people had rejected Him since the fall of Man.

In the verse right before our 1 reading from Colossians 1, we read:

“13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

Our kingdom in which we were powerless to escape from, was the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of that four letter word – hell. But by the crucifixion of Jesus, by the redemption of His blood, we are conveyed into a new kingdom, Jesus' Kingdom, Son of His love. Yes, through faith in Jesus we rejoice to call Jesus our King. For He has born our accusations for us!!!

More good news continues in Colossians 1:

“21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—”

And that was the good news for one thief on the cross who repented and believed that Jesus was indeed the King of his salvation. And in that moment, the thief entered the Kingdom of grace, conveyed into Jesus realm of pardon and peace. Jesus did that through the body of His flesh through death that He suffered alongside the criminal on the cross.

And then an amazing promise was given to the thief that we heard in our 3rd reading from Luke 23.

“Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

It’s your kingdom too! Your kingdom of glory that I give to you! Paradise with Me today! For My blood presents you holy, blameless, and above reproach in His sight!!

We heard these words from Hebrews 9.

“24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

The Jewish people rejected what Jesus was offering them – the real sacrifice! They were stuck on the copies. They wanted a temporal kingdom with a temporal King. But, the real blood that purifies is not the blood of animals, but the blood of Christ, The Great High Priest! Once and for all. It’s done. He put away sin by sacrificing Himself. And rose again to show His victory!

So that... so that...when a man, woman or child dies...believing in Jesus, the immediate judgement is entrance into paradise.

“Hosanna!” we will hear on Sunday – and the humble King did just that – He saved us. And our shouts of praise we give to Jesus who comes to us through His Word and Sacrament to give to us His salvation – His Kingdom of Grace.

‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’

The King of Israel!”

The King of spiritual Israel – His church, your King and mine. Amen

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)