

Christ the King — Gary Robertson

CHRIST THE CRUCIFIED KING

Monday, November 21st

Luke 23:34 *Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing."*

Full reading: *Luke 23: 33-43*

That's it. Done! Finished! The gospel in a nutshell. Jesus intercedes on our behalf and then seals the deal on the cross. Forgiven!!!

I do admit I can become complacent in my faith. I faithfully declare Jesus as my Saviour, pray my thanks that I am forgiven and go about living my imperfect life, confident that I can go again to receive further forgiveness when I again muck up. But Jesus says more here. We need to not only hear the central message of forgiveness but surely need also to hear that we don't know what we are doing. Isn't so much of our sin like that. It's the wrong things we don't even know about that can be so damaging. Perhaps I need to replace some of my complacency with a deeper search to live my life more in tune with the way our Father and Saviour designed it.

Consider this: I wonder if we sometimes only think of our Heavenly and Holy Christ when considering Jesus' crucifixion. Don't get me wrong. This should be at the forefront of our thinking because only our awesome, all forgiving, all powerful and all loving Holy God could possibly come up with such an audacious, gracious and totally undeserved plan to save you and me. But also consider for a moment, Jesus, fully man. Put yourself where Jesus went. Consider both the physical pain and mental anguish he endured. And yet, in the midst of the suffering, His thoughts are for you and me. Jesus – fully God, fully human. Totally amazing!

Prayer: *Father God, thank you that I am forgiven. Jesus, Saviour and Lord, thank you that you are my King and thank you that you, being fully human, endured the ultimate sacrifice for me. Holy Spirit, my helper, help me to see more clearly those things I do not do but should. Be in and with me as I seek to better live out my life of faith. Amen.*

THE ONE BORN KING

Tuesday, November 22nd

Matthew 2:1 *When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king.*

Full reading: *Matthew 2: 1-6*

The passing of time is often marked by reference to monarchy or rulers. We refer to Elizabethan times, Georgian furniture or a Queen Anne window. You possibly remember studying the mighty Ming or Tang dynasties of Chinese history. These Kingships have been forged in both peaceful but quite often brutal and cut-throat times where the throne was attacked and defended. The people have seen benevolent and kind rulers but also harsh and selfish ones too.

Jesus happened to be born in the time of Herod the Great, son of an Arab Sheik, a ruthless and scheming character who saw Jesus as a threat. Outwitted by the magi of the east and God's intervention, Herod then notoriously ordered the murder of young boys throughout the land. Joseph and Mary escaped and didn't return until after Herod's 37 year rule ended. As luck would have it, Herod's son was then a co-conspirator to Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion.

Consider this: Jesus' radical kingship on earth was marked by humility, the preaching of love, honouring God above all else and ultimately of self-sacrifice. His road travelled was not of pomp and pageantry, of seeking power and stature – he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey for goodness sake – but of absolute gracious love, seeking only, our salvation. Could a Kingship be any different from any other earthly kings? Here's one little extra ironic twist. The world now lives in Christ our King's time – in the year two thousand and sixteen in the year of our Lord.

Question and Challenge: When you consider the nature of Jesus' kingship, what might God be calling you to do?

Prayer: Seek the Holy Spirit's help to live a life modelled on Christ's.

BLESSED IS THE KING

Wednesday, November 23rd

Luke 19: 38 *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"*

Full reading: Luke 19: 28-38

'Blessed' is defined as sacred, holy, sanctified, connected to God. Luke tells us that **all the crowd** were praising God, declaring Jesus blessed and king. Luke called all the entire multitude of people gathered, Jesus' disciples. The people knew Jesus had performed miraculous deeds, they had heard and were inspired by His teachings and they credited this to God. They were declaring and praising God that there in their midst, was their Messiah and Saviour. All was well in heaven, as The Message translation states, and all seemed well on earth also.

Do you ever wish you were there in that crowd to shout your adulation and praise to the King of Kings? Do you wonder if you might have had a front row seat and even brushed against Jesus as He rode by? What an amazing pinnacle point of human history. Imagine the euphoria, the absolute emotional high you would feel. Or do you ever fear you might have been in that other crowd, less than a week later, being partner to the most wicked and shameful betrayal in human history?

Consider this: We may not have been in the crowd on the day of Jesus' triumphal entry nor in that **other** crowd that freed a criminal and condemned the Son of God, but perhaps metaphorically we were in both

crowds. Here's the Good News though. As people living and waiting again for Jesus' return, and with the benefit of knowing exactly what transpired, we **do know for certain** what Jesus did for you and me. Surely, every day of our lives, we ought to bow before Christ our Saviour and shout, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Prayer Challenge: As a meditation / prayer, play one of the many versions of, 'Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Hallelujah', easily found on a YouTube search

JESUS QUESTIONED BY PILATE Thursday, November 24th

John 18: 37 *Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.*

I wrestle for understanding of this passage. What are Pilate's intentions? Is he just looking for an excuse to condemn Jesus? How much is he playing into 'keeping the peace' with the Jewish leaders? Is he a weak man who doesn't use the authority he possesses and fobs off his responsibility to others? Does he have some compassion for Jesus and feels guilty about the way events unfold?

And what of Jesus' response to Pilate's questions? Could He not have defended himself and effected a different outcome? Why did this have to happen?

But of course, these are questions from human and earthly perspectives. Jesus' sight was set far above Pilate's or yours or mine.

At the centre of Jesus' thoughts in His response was His Father's heavenly kingdom. While Pilate, the Jewish leaders, Herod and the shouting crowd had particular self interests, fears and unfulfilled expectations in their thinking, Jesus could only think of you and me and what needed to be done that He would join His Father in welcoming us into the heavenly kingdom. Now that's true 'Kingliness'.

Prayer: Ask God not for understanding but simple appreciation and acceptance of the ultimate graciousness shown to us by our one true, heavenly King.

KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS Friday, November 25th

Revelation 19: 11 *Then I saw Heaven open wide—and oh! a white horse and its Rider.*

(v16) *On his robe and thigh is written, King of kings, Lord of lords.*

Heaven opened wide and **oh!** a white horse and its Rider. You can hear the ecstasy in John's description of his vision can't you? His breath was taken away and he must have felt such an enormous privilege at being gifted not just a glimpse but an expansive view of Heaven. While many of his descriptions seem rather cryptic and the many metaphors beyond my commentary, the feeling and emotion in the description is clear. Jesus is no longer riding the road to crucifixion on a donkey but is now truly lifted high, taking His place as the Rider on a white horse judging with truth and justice. And on His robe is the true declaration, King of kings and Lord of lords. Now, things are **truly** right in Heaven! All is prepared for you and me.

Question: What makes you feel ecstatic? How will that pale compared to the delight of being in the presence of your Saviour?

Consider this: Heaven is opened wide for you and me too. Through the gift of faith, the time will come when we will also come face to face with the King of kings and Lord of lords. Now that's got to be beyond our imaginings of ecstasy.

Prayer: *Jesus, King and Lord above all, thank you that you have gone before me. You have prepared the way and oh how I look forward to the day of walking through the open doors to Your heavenly presence. Amen.*

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Saturday, November 26th

1 Timothy 6: 11 *But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. Full Reading: 1 Timothy 6: 6-16*

The preceding few verses warn Timothy to not follow the wayward way of others who have been drawn into the pursuit of wealth. Their eyes have been taken off the ball and the ultimate prize if you will, is lost.

I love these following words from Paul to Timothy in verses 11 and 12 though as they offer such a positive way forward for Timothy, you and me. The focus is turned from selfishness (this always means it will be at the expense of someone else) to selflessness – pursuing **righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness**. Thus follows the ultimate prize of taking hold of the eternal life to which we are called. The temporal prize of wealth which counts for nothing when we leave this world is totally overshadowed by the heavenly prize of eternal life, won by the good fight of the faith – the fight won, of course, not by our own doing, but by Christ's sacrifice and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

Action Prayer: To whom might you be called to be gentle, a selflessness that witnesses your winning faith and confident hope in Christ your Saviour. Prayer for an opportunity to be such a gentle witness.

TRUST IN THE LORD FOREVER

Sunday, November 27th

Read and meditate on Psalm 24 in its entirety: *Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD is the Rock eternal.*

Indulge me a little please as I diverge from the text and tell a story, related to a different but similarly themed old testament text. I was walking Maxie along the beach at Victor this morning (he was quite happy after an ice-cream indulgence at the jetty café) trying to work out the different scenarios and financial implications of selling my Flagstaff Hill home. You see, I'm a planner – one year plans, five year plans, lifetime plans, even eight month plans. I like to think I've got some control over the future; if this, then that; you get the idea. Yes, I know, refer to Saturday's devotion Gary!

I say I'm not one who God talks directly to but I'm sure He directed my thoughts as I walked. I was taken away from the now of my life, back to the year 1992, my first in Lutheran education, and to an inspiring group of young Christians known as the 'Christ Knows No Distance' team. I remember Bruce and Sonia (who later married), Stephen Abraham (Gina Dutschke's brother) and Matthew Schultz, who stayed with us, Emma and two others, whose names escape me. They toured mainly country congregations and injected enormous energy and powerful witness to all they met. They spent considerable time in my Year 6 class. Emma and her companion taught us a song with actions to the text, Proverbs 3:5. The lyrics went;

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, **Lean not on your own understanding**
In all of your ways acknowledge Him, And He will **make your path straight.***

Several months later we were preparing for term 4 concert at the Wagga theatre (this was a big occasion). We had decided to do a memorial recognition to Peter Allen, with a moving rendition of, 'I still call Australia home' but wanted also, some faith expression to permeate our performance. Many of this group of very diverse students were strong in their faith and I learnt a great deal from their student led morning devotions and spending one of my most enjoyable years of teaching with them. A couple of students suggested we might invite Emma and her friend back to sing, 'Trust in the Lord with all of your heart ...'. I pointed out that the team had moved on to Canberra and it was unlikely they would be able to join us but of course, they accepted and motored the two hours back to Wagga to join my Year 6's on stage. I was back stage and I must admit it was a little like I was 'Uncle Max' with the Von Trapp singers and Julie Andrews captivating the audience. There was more than a tear in my eye.

Prayer: So Lord, thank you for the reminder to not lean on my own understanding but trust in you forever! I know that you will then make my path straight! Thank you Lord Jesus. Amen.