

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – Matt 27:27-31 – Christ the King – November 26, 2017

**27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. 30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.**

Today is Christ the King Sunday. It's the Sunday where we think about the fact that Jesus is the King. He rules in our hearts by faith and he rules the whole universe for our good. And in our Gospel for today from Matthew chapter 27 Jesus has all of the symbols of a king. He has a crown. He has a royal robe. He has a king's scepter. He has all of the symbols of a king. But of course there's something strange about this picture of King Jesus in our Gospel for today.

Yes, he has all the symbols of a king. But the crown, is a crown of thorns. And the robe and scepter are props, a makeshift costume thrown together by the Roman soldiers to make fun of Jesus. You see the Roman soldiers knew that Jesus was on trial for claiming to be the King of the Jews and so they dressed Jesus up as a king to make fun of him. And it's hard to read what the Roman soldiers did to him. Jesus is the King of glory but instead of giving him the honor and respect he deserves, they spit on him and hit him on the head again and again. This is a strange picture of Christ the King.

What's even stranger is that Jesus saw this coming. He predicted this. Way back in Matthew chapter 20 it says, **"Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!" (Matt 20:17-20)** Jesus knew that this was going to happen to him but instead of stopping it, he willingly undergoes this.

It's stranger still when we think of what Jesus gave up in order to undergo this treatment. Before Jesus became a human being as a little baby in Bethlehem, Jesus was in heaven. And think about the glory that Jesus had in heaven. The queen of England has a scepter and on the top of that scepter is the largest diamond in the world. It's called the Star of Africa. Well in heaven before Jesus became a human being, he had glory that was infinitely more brilliant than the Star of Africa. And he gave that up so that he could have a crown of thorns stuck on his head and be spit on by Roman soldiers. He had the Star of Africa and he gave it up for this. Why would he do that!? Well before Jesus was born an angel came to Joseph and said, "You will name the child Jesus, because he's going to save his people from their sins." That's why Jesus is undergoing this. That's why he gave up the Star of Africa. So that he could save you from your sins.

You see the suffering and death of Jesus is the fulfillment of God's plan to save us from our sins. God's plan was written about long ago in the prophet Isaiah. One of the prophecies about the Messiah in Isaiah 50:6 says, **"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those**

**who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.”** And Isaiah 53:5 says, **“he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.”** This was God’s plan. Through Christ’s humiliation, suffering and death, we are saved from our sins.

There’s a high school art teacher named Jason Jaspersen. He teaches at one of our WELS area Lutheran high schools in Minnesota. I really appreciate his art and he has a painting of Jesus in which half of his face is glorious and he has glorious crown. And the other half his face is all bloody and he has a crown of thorns. And Jason Jaspersen wrote about that painting: **This image of Jesus wearing a royal crown and crown of thorns has become one of my favorites. ... It says that he volunteered. He surrendered himself to the Law to become the Gospel.** He surrendered himself to the Law to become the Gospel. He was handed over to the Roman soldiers so that we would never be handed over to the devil and his angels. He suffered the pain of the crucifixion so that we would never have to suffer the pain of hell. He experienced separation from God on the cross so that we would never have to be separated from God.

What King would do that, except this one? And this is all the more astonishing when we remember that we are the ones who rebelled against him! We rebelled against God and the penalty for that is death and hell and instead of making us pay the penalty he, the very one we rebelled against, came down and paid the penalty for us. This is a King who dies to save those who rebelled against him!

Before I mentioned that Jesus said that this would happen to him. Jesus said that he would be mocked and flogged and crucified as part of his plan to save us. But Jesus also predicted that something else would happen to him. Back in Matthew chapter 20 Jesus said, **“The Son of Man will be handed over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”** (Matt 20:19-20) Jesus was raised to life on the third day. And now he again has the full enjoyment of the glory he had before the creation of the world. He again has that glory that’s infinitely greater than the Star of Africa. He has all that again. But now he has something else too: He has you. He came down from heaven to save you with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death. All this he did that you should be his own and live under him in his kingdom. And since we belong to King Jesus we’ll honor King Jesus. We will honor him with our offerings. We’ll honor him with the way we live our lives. And all because he suffered and died for us, we’ll get to honor King Jesus in heaven. Amen.