

Daily Discipleship

Christ the King Sunday (C) – Luke 23:33-43

Discipleship: *A New Kind of Leader*

Focus Question: *How does your leadership style reflect your faith in Jesus Christ?*

word of life

“There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’” Luke 23:38 (NRSV)

Read Luke 23:33-43

The liturgical church year concludes with Christ the King Sunday and this reading of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He is a new kind of leader. How else do you explain a ruler who willingly goes to his death on behalf of his people? He was crucified with criminals while people watched and the leaders scoffed.

1. *Describe an ideal ruler.*
2. *How are rulers typically protected from harm?*

People yelled, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” (Luke 23:35 NRSV) The soldiers mocked him with sour wine and challenged him, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” (Luke 23:37 NRSV)

3. *Why didn’t Jesus verbally respond to them?*
4. *How might an earthly ruler try to save himself?*

A sign was placed over his head with the words, “This is the King of the Jews.” (Luke 23:38) The sign left nothing to the imagination, but made a clear statement about the identity of Jesus. But Jesus was not living up to the expectations of a king. So, the words written as mockery, in reality revealed the truth of the situation. Jesus died as a servant-leader who had a greater vision of salvation than just saving himself on the cross. He embodied the description of God’s servant articulated in Isaiah 42.

Hanging beside Jesus were criminals condemned to die. One joined the crowd in mocking Jesus. He wanted Jesus to save the whole group. Why not? The other criminal was offended by his remarks. He understood the criminals deserved their punishment, but he believed Jesus was an innocent man. This conversation with the criminals is unique to the Gospel of Luke.

The second criminal did not ask to be rescued from his death sentence. He knew he got what he deserved, but he asked simply to be remembered. He believed Jesus was a king who was going to his kingdom. Despite Jesus facing his own death, Jesus took seriously the request by the second criminal and responded with powerful words, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43 NRSV)

5. *Describe each of the criminals.*
6. *What does it mean to be “remembered”?*
7. *What does this conversation with the criminal tell you about Jesus as king?*
8. *What is being promised to the criminal?*

Sometimes being a ruler is acting in a new way despite the crowd’s call for more familiar behavior. Jesus models a different kind of leadership, proving a ruler is not about ordering people to follow commands or executing power.

9. *What does it mean to be a servant-leader?*

word among us

A new boy moved into the neighborhood and began attending a nearby elementary school. He was big and strong for his age. At first glance he was quite intimidating. The bully of the school took an immediate disliking to him and was ready to fight him the first day, but the new boy refused to fight. Instead, he used his delightful sense of humor to flavor all situations. He made friends easily, cooperated with the teachers, and was a natural leader. This just made the bully more determined to bring the new boy down and ruin him.

1. *What is a possible ending to the story?*
2. *What made the new boy less intimidating?*

Leaders come in all ages, shapes, and sizes. But for all, Jesus demonstrates a new kind of leadership. He is often described as a servant-leader.

3. *What can you learn about leadership from Jesus?*
4. *How can a person be a servant and a leader?*
5. *How would you describe your leadership style?*

Jesus was a leader who entered the waters of the Jordan River and was baptized with sinners. He called sinners to follow him, demonstrating patience as he tried to teach his ways to them. He wept with them and dined with them. By enduring mockery, pain, and death itself, Jesus lived through the worst. He completed the mission of God by dying on the cross and being raised from death.

6. *As you consider Jesus as a ruler, what impresses you about his approach to leadership?*
7. *What advice would Jesus give to future leaders in the church?*

As much as Jesus interacted with people, he walked the path to his death alone. No one else could take his place or do it for him. Those who chose to mock him could not see the bigger picture and the new kind of leadership he demonstrated. But their lack of understanding did not deter Jesus. It was never about people having complete understanding of the ways of God. It was and is about God acting in a particular way toward humanity through Jesus Christ.

8. *What if Jesus would have come down off the cross?*
9. *What if Jesus came only in power to command humanity into faith?*
10. *Would you follow that kind of leader?*

Discipleship means being a student of someone's teaching. Christian disciples choose to follow Jesus Christ. By enduring mockery, pain, and death itself, Jesus lived through the worst. We are to try to emulate Jesus in our lives, particularly when we are in leadership roles, be it parenting, work, or volunteering. But it is not easy to be a servant-leader. Daily we can call on the Holy Spirit to guide us into the ways of discipleship, allowing Jesus to lead our lives and rule over us.

11. *What does it mean for Jesus Christ to rule your life?*
12. *What do you hope to remember from this lesson?*

Prayer

Christ, lead our lives and rule over us. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Isaiah 42

last word

Find or create a small cross
to carry with you
each day of the week.



Daily Discipleship

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