

Christ's Destiny

You might be wondering why we are reading a traditional Palm Sunday text on this day when we are supposed to celebrate Christ as King. This scripture was chosen as the lectionary reading for today because it helps illustrate how God's way is so completely different from man's way. Let's examine what is going on here. If Jesus was indeed the King of the Jews as was written on the plaque above his head where he hung on the cross then his execution meant much more than the death of a criminal.

In ancient times, the killing of the king of a nation signified the ruin of that nation. The ruler's death at the hands of a conquering army meant the complete and total defeat of that nation. With that defeat came the taking of the spoils of war. All the defeated nation's treasury would be looted, buildings, destroyed and people enslaved. The killing of the king basically meant annihilation. Therefore, in the collective mind of Rome, the death of Jesus solidified the enslavement and total defeat of the nation of Israel. Even the people who were watching that day bought into the notion that this gruesome death was some form of humiliation and they shouted insults at him the way would berate a defeated enemy. The Roman soldiers mocked Jesus as well shouting, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself".

This was not the first time Jesus had heard similar words...let's look in Luke 4:1 – 13

Luke 4:1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.' "

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.

⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.' "

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.

¹⁰ For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;

¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' "

¹² Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Three times Satan lead off his temptations with the phrase, "If you are..." And as the scripture says in verse 13. When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. I believe this was that opportune time. Satan knew as Jesus knew that Jesus was not the king of the Jews, but was destined to be the king or ruler of God's kingdom which included everything that Satan ruled. So, for Satan, the execution of Jesus meant finally that Satan had defeated God himself, which was something he dearly desired. There is a hint in the scripture for today that what Satan desired, and Rome ordered, and the chief priests begged Rome for—the execution of Jesus was about to go off the rails so to speak. That is when Jesus says to one of the thieves, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." The onlookers and those standing nearby must have thought Jesus was delirious with pain and thirst.

Here is where God's way is amazingly different from our way. Who else but God could take this seemingly complete destruction of His plan for humanity and turn it into exactly what He wanted it to be? Remember in the temple when sacrifices were made to atone

for sins, it was the priest, the servant of God that carried out the sacrifice. Jesus was destined first to be the Lamb of God sacrificed for the whole of humanity so that our relationship with God would no longer be hindered by sin. The Priests Caiaphas and Anas, Pontius Pilate and the soldiers of Rome and even Satan himself were actually fulfilling the duty of the temple priests and sacrificing, **not executing Jesus.**

Now no sacrificed lamb, ram, goat or dove has ever come back to life after being slaughtered so imagine the complete and utter shock that Satan experienced when Jesus the Lamb of God not only rose from the dead, but rose in a new spiritual body the like of which had never been seen. Is it any wonder that those who put Jesus to death refused to believe that He had been resurrected?

This is our shocking, awesome, wonderful, God. There is no force on earth or in heaven that can defeat our God. There is no other God like Him. In fact, there is no other God. We cannot reason Him out of existence. We cannot over power Him and we certainly cannot outlast Him.

Where other rulers lord their power over others, God does not. His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. God is the essence of goodness and love and we are encouraged by scripture to strive to be more like Him.

Today as we recognize Jesus as King of God's kingdom we can be grateful that we have such a loving and good king. Our king not only loves us but shows us how to love each other. Our king not only provides for all our needs in this life, but promises us an eternal life like His in the future. What other ruler ever has said to his subjects come and share everything that I have and be like me? I can't think of any, but that's what our God says to us.

So, let's do it! Let's strive to be more like God. Let's share God love with our neighbors and more importantly as we have the chance let's share God with our neighbors so that they can be part of the family of God too.