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Sermon for The Last Sunday of the Church Year, Anno Domini 2019



The Scriptures speak of Jesus in a number of ways. The Scriptures speak of Him as *Good Shepherd, Teacher, Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, Risen Savior, King of Kings*, and on and on. And these are all true. But time and time again when Jesus presents Himself or the Scriptures speak specifically, He is presented as **THE CRUCIFIED ONE**. You cannot know Jesus apart from the crucifixion. Even when called these other names, you only know their fullest meaning through the cross.

He is the Good Shepherd *because* He lays down His life for the sheep.

He is teacher *because* it is by His death that He teaches who God is.

He is the Prince of Peace *because* He reigns at the crucifixion, **making peace by the blood of his cross**.

He is Emmanuel *because* the God who is with us is the God who dies *for* us.

He is the Risen Savior because it was the cross that put Him in the tomb.

He is King of Kings because it is from the cross that He reigns. That is His Throne.

This is who He is and what He does. To know Jesus is to look at the crucifix.

Apart from the crucifixion, nothing matters.

Apart from the crucifixion, you cannot know Jesus.

Why else would you—Risen Savior— have a massive, offensive crucifix on your steeple?

Why does the Church place a crucifix in the most prominent place in the sanctuary?

Why do we build churches in the shape of a cross?

Why do we mark the baptized with the sign of the cross on their forehead and their hearts, marking them as one redeemed by the crucified?

Why does Luther and the fathers teach you make this sign of the cross on yourself?

We do all this because in the crucifix, is where God makes Himself known. In the crucifix, you see **the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation by whom all things were created, in whom all things hold together.**

Because **in him**, on the cross, **all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell**, Because in the crucifix is the Glory of God. This is His throne.

Today is Christ the King Sunday because we hear in the Gospel of Christ our King on His throne of the cross. And that it is from this cross that He reigns.

Born in the city of David and being of the line of David, He is the heir to the Davidic throne. On Palm Sunday, He entered into the city humble and mounted on a donkey like King Solomon did so long ago. While being beaten for the sin of the world, He is even arrayed as king: He is given royal garments, He is given His scepter, and He is coronated with the crown of

thorns. To top it all off, as He ascends His royal throne, such a sign is even placed above Him: This is the King.

It is from the Crucifix that Jesus reigns as Christ the King.

As we begin advent next week which will lead us into the season of Christmas, know that this is why the baby is in the manger, so the Man might be on the cross. The Prince rules from the throne of His mother's lap so that the King might reign from the throne of His cross.

Throughout all time, Jesus makes Himself known to us as the Crucified one. This is how He makes Himself known and how He wants us to know Him.

Think of when Adam and Eve broke the world in the fall. Jesus comes and stands there in the Garden looking at the image of their demise knowing that it will be the same thing by which they will be saved—a tree. He stares at Satan hanging on the tree whose head He will crush by Himself hanging on a tree. From the very beginning He makes Himself known as the Crucified God. That *this* is His Glory and *this* is how He makes Himself known.

Think of when Jacob sees the so-called *heavenly ladder* upon which God Himself stands. My friends, this is not a ladder as we think of it as though Jacob and God had roofing work to get done. This is not two beams with many rungs between

them. This is a single beam with a single rung across it—upon which, Genesis says, is God Himself. This is the cross. God shows Himself to the patriarch Jacob in the fullest extent of His Glory. He shows Him the Cross.

Think of the bronze serpent that God commanded Moses to make. He showed them their salvation by taking the curse, a snake, and placing it upon a cross. So that in the fullness of time, God would show what this meant when He Himself took the curse of our sin and death and crucified them in His Body on the cross.

Think of the prophet Isaiah who sees Jesus high and lifted up. This does not mean that God the Father is picking Jesus up and throwing Him in the air like a toddler but it means that Isaiah sees Jesus, God Himself, *high and lifted up* on a cross. To be *lifted up* is to be *exalted* this is the same word. The moment He is lifted up on the cross is the moment he is exalted.

Think of the Resurrection appearances. When the angel comes to the women, what does he say “You seek Jesus—the Crucified One”. When He shows Himself to His disciples, He identifies Himself by the marks of His crucifixion. That means that even in the resurrection, Jesus still bears the eternal marks of the crucifixion.

Think finally of the Revelation to Saint John. What does He see? In the most beautiful beatific vision in all of Holy Scripture, what does He see? A Lamb standing as though slain. This is why when you enter into the beatific vision of the Divine Liturgy and pastor holds up the Body and Blood of Christ, you break into a hymn of adoration as you sing to the Lamb of God now made present on the altar who takes away the sin of the world. Where you receive in the bread what hung on the cross and in the chalice that which flowed from His side. **For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**

So now we come to the crucifixion. Where God has taken the curse of humanity onto Himself in the Incarnation so that any who gaze upon Him might be saved. He has climbed onto the ladder of the cross which now in Him brings together heaven and earth. The Tree of Life has been placed on the Mount of the Skull so that the head of Satan and death itself is crushed by the cross, pierced by the nails, and trampled under the feet of God. He has been high and lifted up on the cross so that He might be eternally pierced and all the world might see the true Glory of God in the crucifixion. The Lamb has been slain on the altar and the King has been nailed to His throne.

It is here, at the enthronement of our King where God the Father **delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.** Jesus wants you to see Him as He is as the crucified God. *Because* it is from this crucified Jesus that you tangibly receive the forgiveness of sins. You are the cause of this cross and this kingdom and Jesus will not let that be in vain. Notice that immediately after the Gospel says “**There they Crucified Him**” that Jesus says “**Father forgive them**”. So, there we see where forgiveness of sins comes from. It isn’t just made up, it isn’t just nice words, and it is not just comfort. But it comes from the cross where Jesus forgives you. And this is not some abstraction where your sins just disappear. They are placed on him and crucified. Your sins are transferred to Jesus and His righteousness is transferred to you. The source of forgiveness is the crucified Jesus. With the penitent thief you bow your head and say “**Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom**” and as to the penitent thief, He says to you, Today, you are with me in paradise. Just as He answered the prayer of the thief, so also has He given you hope and the forgiveness of sins. And remember forgiveness of sins is not just an abstraction, it is a transaction.

Your sins have been removed; you are no longer their slave.

Those pet sins, those internet sites, those fits of rage, that laziness and gluttony and lust and whatever Satan knows will tempt you the most. Those do not own you or define you. Christ does. They have been crucified with Him on the cross.

So, when you receive the absolution that flows from that cross, go and sin no more.

When you receive the sacraments, which flowed from that side, go and sin no more.

When you look at a crucifix, know what took place there, and go and sin no more.

On the cross is where Jesus reigns and where He is king. It is in the Crucifixion that His name is hallowed, His kingdom comes and His will is done. It is from the crucifixion that we receive our daily bread. That our sins are forgiven, that we are led not into temptation and where we are delivered from evil. It is in at the crucifixion that we see His Kingdom, power, and glory, forever and ever. ✝ Amen.

