

In this reading Paul prays that the Colossians may be strengthened to meet whatever is to come, and he praises the Son as the visible likeness of the invisible God, through whom all things were created. He is the head of his body, the church, and the source of its life. There were some new disciples at Colossae who wished to worship Jesus as one of several lords. Paul insists that there can be no other divinities. God's full nature is in him. He is before all things and is the unifying principle for all created life. Through him we have been brought out of darkness into his kingdom, and by his sacrifice alone God reconciles all things.

Hear now these words from Paul's letter to the Colossians

Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

In the gospel Jesus, as he hangs upon the cross, is mocked as the Christ and the King of the Jews. To a thief crucified with him he promises Paradise. The story forces us also to ask, “What kind of ruler is this? What royal power does he have? What sort of God would allow God’s chosen one to die like this?” Clearly the strength of God revealed in Christ is very different from the human understanding of kingship. Jesus’ words to the thief are words of hope to all who die in every manner of circumstance.

Hear now these words from the gospel of Luke.

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Liturgist: This is the gospel message of our Lord and Savior

All: May the reading and the hearing of Your word inform our minds, comfort our souls, and guide our feet.

