

**SERMON**  
**Christ the King**  
**November 25, 2007**

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalm 46

Colossians 1:11-20

Luke 23:33-43

Brothers and sisters in Christ, grace to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, who is the Christ. Amen.

Jesus, Remember me when you come into your kingdom.” These are the words of the criminal who was crucified next to Jesus. We are not told the man’s name. All we are told is that he is a criminal.

He, like Jesus, is being humiliated, tortured, and put on display for all to see. Roman citizens were never crucified. Crucifixion was for the outsiders, the ones who did not belong, the ones who were considered almost sub-human.

This criminal next to Jesus was one of the forgotten ones. There is no mention of any family or friends who have come to grieve his death. He is all alone. He is naked. He is hanging on a cross waiting to die a humiliating death. He is forgotten. So he turns to Jesus, his last and only possibility for hope.

I would guess that all of us have felt that we have been forgotten at some point in our life. It is a great fear that we have. Sometimes I believe that we fear being forgotten more than death itself. To be forgotten means having no voice, no name, no face, indeed no identity. It is a feeling of being worthless.

One definition of “forget” is “to overlook, omit, or neglect intentionally.” Have there been times in your life where you were overlooked, omitted, or intentionally neglected? For this is what it means to be forgotten. I would like to share with you what it sounds like to be forgotten.

My name is Christina. I am 13 years old and go to Middle School. Sometimes school can be okay, but most of the time I’d rather be doing something else. You see, in school, people can be so mean. Sometimes they make fun of you for no reason at all.

You could just be walking down the hall minding your own business when a group of kids will point at you and giggle. You don’t know what they’re laughing about. But you know it’s not because they like you and want to hang around with you.

That happened to me once. The sad thing is, is that I thought they were my friends. That's the thing, you never know who your real friends are. They could be your friend one day, and then the next day pretend that they don't even know you.

I want to fit in. I want to be liked. Sometimes I think that I would do anything just to be part of the group. But it seems like the harder I try, the more I am rejected. When you're not part of the group, you feel that you have been forgotten, like you're a nothing – a nobody.

The problem is, is that in order to be part of the group, you're sometimes pressured into doing things you don't want to. You wouldn't believe the drugs that are being bought and sold everyday, even in our school.

All that I am looking for is to be accepted for who I am. That's something I don't even get from my parents. All they do is yell at me; "clean your room, do your homework, turn the stereo down, quit bothering your sister.

When I try to talk to them, they pretend to listen, but I know they are really thinking about something else. They're always too busy for me. It's like I'm being ignored, like what I say doesn't really matter. I feel like I have been forgotten. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

My name is Jonathan, and I'm gay. Oh, it's okay, most people know it by now. I remember growing up as a child knowing that I was somehow different than the other kids. I never really seemed to fit in. I couldn't figure out why, until I got a little older, probably sometime in my early teens.

But knowing I was gay and what that meant didn't make things any easier. As a matter of fact, things got harder. I was always trying to hide it. I didn't want anyone to know. It was my little secret. I wanted so bad to be what people call "normal". So I pretended the best I could.

I can't tell you how many times I cried myself to sleep at night praying to God. At first, I was angry at God. "God, why did you make me this way!" Then, I felt guilty. Maybe it was something that I had done. Maybe if I had more faith, or if I tried harder, I could change. But no matter how much I prayed, or how much I tried to change, I couldn't get rid of the way I felt.

I remember the time I first told my parents. I was home for Spring break from college. I'm sure that they had suspected something was up, but they tried to put it out of their mind. Maybe they figured that if they didn't think about it, it wouldn't be true.

You see, my father was an ex Marine and didn't mince words. He also had quite the temper. I remember whenever there were gays portrayed on television, he would say "fags" or "queers" with some other four letter expletive that I won't repeat. His cutting

words would give me the feeling like being stabbed in the stomach.

We were sitting around the kitchen table when I finally worked up the courage to tell them.

My dad got so angry. He got up and yelled; “not my son!” He threw his chair across the room and stormed out of the house. Those were the last words he spoke to me. My mom just put her head down on the table and cried.

It’s been a little over five years now. My father still has not spoken to me. Mom and I will talk once in a while, but just about mundane things like “how’s the weather where you are?”

Perhaps they are trying to just forget about me all together. I still cry myself to sleep many nights as I pray; “Jesus, please do not turn away from me. Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

My name is Monica. As of a few years ago, that was a name you rarely heard. Then there was the big sex scandal in the White House. Now, whenever I tell people my name, it’s like something else is going through their mind. I guess I can’t blame them, I’d probably think the same thing.

However, I’m not like the Monica they’re probably thinking about. I am not famous with reporters following me around wherever I go. I did not have my picture on the cover of every magazine and tabloid.

Actually, I’m not very popular at all. I was married for a little over 7 years. My husband and I were blessed with three beautiful children, two girls and a boy. We were active in our Church. The kids loved Sunday School and I sang in the choir.

I felt so fortunate that God had blessed me with a wonderful family. Then one day my husband came home from work and said that he had found someone else, and wanted a divorce. I had no idea. I fell to the floor in disbelief.

At first I thought it was some sort of sick joke. But soon I realized that it was no joke at all. I was so angry I could hardly stand it. I wasn’t only mad at my husband, I was mad at God. How could God do this to me, I cried.

It’s been about three years since my divorce. I have custody of the children. My ex-husband visits them once a month if he has the time. He pays some child support, but never on time, and rarely the full amount.

I found a job stocking shelves at a local department store. It’s virtually impossible to support a family of four making little more than minimum wage. I dread the day when one of us gets sick since my job doesn’t provide us with health insurance.

We had to sell our house, and now we live in a two-bedroom apartment. I'm always tired. After working all day, I have nothing left for the children. I haven't been back to church since my divorce. I feel so ashamed.

No one from church has ever called on me. Perhaps they just don't know what to say. Yes, there are often times when I feel forgotten. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

My name is Edna. It's been almost 6 years now since my husband passed away. Let me tell you, those years have been very lonely. I know Stanley would not have wanted me to be this way. He would have wanted me to go on with my life. But I can't help it. I miss him so much. The holidays are the worst.

I must say, that during those last few years before Stanley died, things were not easy. You see, Stanley suffered from Alzheimers disease. What a horrible disease. By the end, he didn't even know who I was. Can you believe that?

After 52 years of marriage, he didn't even know my name. It was like he had completely forgotten me.

I remember the time we went to Yellowstone Park. It's the first time we had been in the mountains. He thought it was so amazing that we actually were standing looking down at the clouds. He was running around pretending he was a bird. Stanley always had a good sense of humor. He would make me laugh.

But since his passing, I haven't laughed very much. I sit at home and wait for the time to pass. My knees have been giving out on me lately and I'm afraid I might fall. It's scary when you live alone.

You have thoughts of lying there in pain unable to get to the phone. It could be days until someone finds you. I realize that soon I will have to leave my home and move into a long-term care facility. I dread that day.

I've lived in that house for over 40 years. It would be like taking away all of my memories. I can honestly say that I have days when I've been so depressed that I'd wished I were dead. Most of my friends have either passed on, or are unable to get around.

So, I sit, day after day, week after week, month after month. It's like waiting for the next bad thing to happen to you. When you're 82 years old, you really don't have a future, only a past. There are so many times when I feel that I have been forgotten. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

My name is Charles. Sometimes I feel that my entire world is caving in around me. Sure, I have a good job. I make a decent income. But the stress gets to me. The company I

work for seems to be stable, but with the economy the way it is, you never know.

I try not to worry, but if I ever lost my job, we would lose everything. I have a loving wife and two beautiful children. On the outside it would seem like I have it all. But it doesn't always seem that way to me.

With the hours I put in at the office, it doesn't leave much time for my family. By the time I get home, the kids are ready for bed. I ask myself if it is all worth it. Sure, we have all of the amenities in life, but is that what's important? Maybe, it's me? Maybe, my work has become a way for me to escape? Perhaps I am really a failure as a husband and a father?

This wouldn't be the first time I have failed. I won't go into detail, but I have done some things that I am ashamed of. There have been times when I have not been totally faithful in my marriage. There have been times when I have been less than honest in my business transactions.

Sometimes it seems that I am always looking for the next best thing to fulfill my needs and desires. I know it seems like I have everything all together, but there are times when I feel totally alone. It's almost like I have been forgotten. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Perhaps some of you can relate to these people. No matter who we are, how much money we have, or how popular we are, there are times when we feel forgotten. The idea of being totally forgotten can be devastating. It can lead to despair and tragically, even suicide. There is nothing worse than being ignored or forgotten.

A few years ago there was a popular television series called "Cheers". I'm certain most of you have seen it. It takes place in this neighborhood pub. The slogan is; "It is a place where everyone knows your name." "A place where everyone knows your name."

When you walk into that pub, you are not forgotten. It is like coming home. Home is the place where we are never forgotten. Our home is in Jesus Christ. It begins when we are baptized. For in the waters of baptism, we are named and claimed as a child of God.

Therefore, we can be assured that we are remembered.

This was the prayer of the man crucified next to Jesus. His simple plea was for Jesus to remember him. He was one who had been forgotten his whole life. He had turned to a life of crime. Perhaps his life of crime was a plea for attention – a plea to be remembered, not for the crimes that he had committed, but for the man that God created him to be – a plea to be loved.

And after the man asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom, Jesus said; "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." The man next to Jesus

was going home where he will never be forgotten again.

You see, on the cross, Jesus is revealed to be a type of king different from what many had anticipated. He has the power to welcome others to paradise but will not use that power to save himself from death.

So perhaps this can be our cry today. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus will say; "I will never ever forget you, and indeed someday you will dwell with me in paradise. Amen.

May the peace that passes all understanding be with you now and for life everlasting.

Amen.

## CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

What is a king?

Do any of you know any kings?

What do kings look like? What do they do?

Today is Christ the King Sunday. Do you have any idea what we celebrate today?

After Jesus was arrested, the guards beat him. And then they took a purple robe and put it on him. Then they took a bunch of thorny branches and made a crown. They put it on his head which made his head bleed. When Jesus was dying on the cross, some people came and nailed a sign to the top of the cross. Do you know what it said? KING OF THE JEWS

So, do you think Jesus looked like a king?

Jesus was a different kind of king. The people were wanting a king who would be powerful and destroy their enemies. But Jesus was a king who loved the people who followed him. He even loved his enemies.

Have you ever heard of a king like that – a king who loved his enemies?

Jesus showed us what it means to be a real king. Next Sunday Advent begins. What do we prepare for during Advent? What big event is coming in about one month? Christmas.

What do we celebrate on Christmas? The birth of Jesus who is our King

Let us pray... O Lord, thank you for sending your son Jesus to be our King. Even when dying on a cross, he still showed the world how to love. Help us to follow him by loving each other as he loved us. Amen.