THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS

Luke 23:26-43

Key Verse 23:38

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

Today is September 11 which we cannot forget. We had a great tragedy at that day.

But people’s response shows who they are especially at the time of trial and agony.

In the Auschwitz centration camp, the Jews were treated less than animals. There, the people’s first priority is to survive at any cost of anything including betrayal of others or sacrifice of others’ lives. But even there, there were a very few people who gave their last food for hungry roommate and comforted others, and they die out of starvation. Even there, there were very few who went to gas chambers reciting the Lord’s prayer and died in dignity. Surely their response shows something about them.

Today we see the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. And the response of our Lord at the time of crucifixion shows something about him. It shows that he is the king of the Jews, God’s chosen people. So today we would like to see why Jesus is called as ‘the king of the Jews.’

My message has two parts. Part I. Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me (v.26-31) Part II. Father, forgive them (v.32-43)

**Part I. Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me (v.26-31)**

Look at verses 26-31.

**26As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. 27A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ 30Then “‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us! and to the hills, “Cover us!”’**

**31For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”**

Finally, the Roman soldiers led Jesus to be executed. But Jesus was so exhausted that he could not carry his cross. So they took Simon from Cyrene and had him carry the cross behind Jesus.

A large number of people followed Jesus including the women who mourned and wailed for him. They were mourning and wailing for him because they knew Jesus was innocent. They could not control their sorrow because of Jesus who would be crucified although he did not do anything wrong.

So far, the Lord had been silent before Pilate most of the times when he was accused. Except answering who he was, he was silent and he did not defend himself at all.

But here, he broke his silence. He intentionally turned to the women and said, “**“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ 30Then “‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us! and to the hills, “Cover us!”’**

**31For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”**

It was the time of his trial. It was the time of his great pain. But his concern was not him but the women following him and wailing for him. His tender compassion went out for them. He appreciated their compassion for him. But his tender compassion for them compelled him to speak. **“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children.”**

And he explained why he said so. It was because they will face terrible times sooner of later if they did not weep and repent. They will experience unbearable suffering in the hands of others if they did not repent of their sins. “**29For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ 30Then “‘they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us! and to the hills, “Cover us!”’**

The suffering was so severe that they would prefer to be buried alive under the mountains or hills.

The Lord’s great and tender compassion shows who he is. “The king of the Jews.”

The first king of the China, they call the first emperor of China made his tomb. He designed his tomb in such a way that his concubines and those people who worked there would be buried alive. It was all for his own benefit. They were buried alive to serve him who was dead. And they were buried to keep his tomb to be known to other people. And he is the first emperor of the China.

But the tender compassion of Jesus toward these wailing women shows how Jesus is. He is the king of the Jews. He is the king of compassion.

In his compassion, he spoke the truth. He did not want daughters of Jerusalem and her children not to suffer from calamity that would soon come to them if they did not weep and repent. Obvious some women or her children could have experience such tragedy when Roman soldiers destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70.

‘Green tree’ may refer peaceful times or Jesus Christ. ‘Dry tree’ can refer to terrible times or ‘sinners’. But whatever the interpretation is, the truth remains the same.

It is truth of God that unrepentant sins would bring God’s judgment. All of un-forgiven sins would bring God’s judgment. God can bring his judgment through other men. Ultimately his judgment will be on those who do not weep for their sins. They will face unbearable agony from God’s judgment. They will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur forever.

**Part II. Father, forgive them (v.32-43)**

Look at verses 32-38.

**32Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.33When 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. 34Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.**

**35The 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.”**

**36The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar37and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”**

**38There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.**

When Jesus was crucified two criminals were also executed. The place is called the Skull because the hill looked like Skull. “They crucified him there.” What a just one sentence.

“They crucified him there.” This is like anti-climax. The crucifixion of Jesus is such a huge event in the sight of God but it is recorded in one sentence. “They crucified him there.” There was no description of crucifixion. They were no agony of Jesus mentioned including his groans and pains. But we know it was there.

Psalm chapter 22 reveals it.

**Psalm 22:14-18**

**14I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. 15My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. 16Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. 17All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. 18They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.**

And Jesus was silent. He bore all of such unbearable pains and sufferings. And his fist words from his mouth after he was crucified was, “**“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”**

He was the only person who can call God’s judgment against those who crucified him. He was the only innocent person among all men that he could demand such retaliation against those who wronged him. But he said, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”**

He did not express his pain. But he prayed for the forgiveness of those who sinned against him.

When Jesus was crucified, people stood watching. They watched probably wondering how such powerful Jesus became so powerless and was crucified without exercising his power even once. They were wondering that how this whole thing could have happened. Some of them could have felt that they were deceived by Jesus after they believed Jesus is the Son of God.

The rulers were not satisfied even after they crucified Jesus. They were still angry against Jesus and they kept insulting him. **“He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”**

**35The 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.”**

**36The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar37and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”**

To Roman soldiers, Jesus was the object of mocking. It was just to have fun to kill their times. They mocked him, saying, “**“If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”**

You know, insulting really hurt us. Do you know why? Because it hurts our pride and sense of worthiness bringing shame. ‘Shame’ is great pain because all men are created in the image of God and desire to be honored and respected. No one wants be shameful.

Jesus did not retaliate. He did not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. He was silent. He took all of their insults and shame upon him.

His response shows something about Jesus. He is the king of the Jews. This Jesus, who prayed for forgiveness of Jesus with compete excuse, is the king of the Jews. So there was written notice above him and it says, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

When we think about forgiveness, we find that it is impossible for us to forgive. How can we forgive someone who hurt us? We suffer for the rest of our lives because of their sharp tongues and their boasting deeds. They even do not know how much they hurt us. How can we forgive them?

It seems like it is complete justice to demand their blood. When we try to forgive others, we find that simply we cannot do so.

But when we do not forgive others, we have trouble. We cannot have peace in our hearts. We experience God’s judgment inside of us as we judge them in our hearts. Our judgment, and anger, and bitterness against them repeated recycled inside of us and our inner person and our soul suffers in great deal.

How can we resolve this problem? We cannot forgive others. But if we do not forgive others we are destroyed. Even for our own benefit we want to forgive others but we cannot. So what should we do?

What Jesus said gives us a hint. What is the hint? “For they do not know what they are doing.” If others would know how much they would hurt us, they would not do so. If they know how much their sharp tongues and boastful behaviors would damage us they would not do so. So Jesus said, “for they do not know what they are doing.”

We may know what we are doing. But when we hurt others and damage others, many times we may not know what we are doing.

So then what is our ultimate solution? Our solution is to come to Jesus, the king of the Jews, God’s chosen people, and think about how he responded.

It was not people’s terrible treatment of Jesus which defined who Jesus is. It is how Jesus responded to the terrible situation and it shows who Jesus is. Jesus is the king of the Jews.

In our times, we don’t treat our kings in this way. We honor king and respect him. No one dares to crucify him, and insult him and mock him. But by his response he shows that he is the king of the Jews.

The Jews crucified him. The Jews insulted him and mocked. The Jews rejected him and humiliated him and wounded him. But Jesus’ response shows he is the king of the Jews. He is the king of the Jews because he forgave their sins at the cost of his own life. He made no threats when he suffered. He did not retaliate. He did not repay insult with insult. But rather he repaid insult with the blessing. “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

So lets say to ourselves, putting our names, “Father, forgive John Kwon, because he does not know what he is doing.” Let’s go.

Now let us put others name. We all have someone who hurt us. We don’t say their names. So let’s just say ‘him’ or ‘her’. So if that person is male, say ‘Father, forgive him’. If that person is female, say, “Father, forgive her.” Let’s go. “Father, forgive him for he does not know what he is doing.”

Let us remember what others are doing to us does not define who we are. Our response according to our choice defines who we are.

Un-forgiveness is like poison around us all the time, 24/7. We don’t have any strength to remove it. We cannot forgive others. But we can come to Jesus and remember what he said, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

Jesus became the king of the Jews not because the Jews treated him well but because Jesus blessed them despite their terrible rejection.

But there was one man who accepted Jesus as the king of the Jews and was blessed so much.

Look at verses 39-43.

**39One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”**

**40But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? 41We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”**

**42Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”**

**43Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

The blessed criminal knew Jesus had done nothing wrong. How did he know? Probably he heard Jesus’ prayer, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” No criminal would offer such prayers. Most of criminals would die cursing God and others because they think they receive unfair treatment. So they die in bitterness.

We do have choice. We are created in the image of God. And we have choice. Others hurt us. And why do we allow them to decide our response. Satan and our enemies want us to repay evil with evil and insult with insult. They want us to retaliate. They want us to become evil like others who hurt us. They want us to become like them.

Don’t we have right to refuse their harsh demand. They want us to live as slaves of revengeful thought all throughout our lives. Why should we offer our slaves to be such demand? We have already been hurt. Why do we offer ourselves to such hurt more?

Do we have freedom to choose? Do we have the image of God which allows us to have freedom to choose? Yes. We can choose different response and it will show who we are. It will show we live by faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We come to Jesus and pray to him, “Lord, someone hurt me. I cannot forgive him. I cannot control my anger. I don’t want to have any fellowship with him. Lord, what should I do?” The Lord will probably say, “with your own strength you cannot forgive him. If you want to try to forgive him you may hate him even more. But I can help you. I can give you my strength and my compassion and my grace and mercy that you can forgive. You can choose different response. You are already hurt by others. Why do you want to live as others’ slaves hating them all the time which hurts you all the time. You can reveal who you are. You can define yourself. You can demonstrate who you are. You can show yourself to God and man about who you are. You can recognize your sin and pray to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ And Jesus will probably answer, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

The word ‘paradise’ is used only 3 times in the bible. It shows indeed there is the paradise which we lost and we can be with Jesus when we are forgiven.

Today we learned how Jesus showed himself as the king of the Jews. It was not the terrible treatment of the Jews which reveals that Jesus is the king of the Jews but the gentle and compassionate forgiveness of Jesus which reveals that Jesus is the king of the Jews.

So if others hurt you, remember you have a chance to become their king and their queen. It is not a bad option. By being hurt by others you become their kings and queens, and it is not a bad choice for us.

One word: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.