**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**20th November 2022**

**Luke 23:33-43**

**Gathering**

It is the last Sunday of the church year

We have journeyed together through a plethora of stories

But it always ends up here

On a hill

By a cross

And a saviour who has given everything

Here is the reigning Christ

The Saviour King

Broken on a tree

Between two joking criminals

The throne of God’s own

And it is here we gather

And wonder

How is this the reign of Christ

**Welcome**

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of new Kilpatrick Parish… and again… thank you for letting us join you in worship today… This is a Sunday with a name: Christ the King… first invented by the Pope in the 1920s to contrast the rapidly secularisation of society…

We still speak of it though its name has changed to Reign of Christ… a less authoritarian title… yet still with its problems… However, the reading we have on this Sunday each year… sits in vivid contrast with what we would typically understand as reigning and kingship… So we gather in the juxtaposition of God and the world… OUR language and the kingdom’s… and meet a God unfamiliar to the one we once met… and described in ways that contrast with the world… let us worship…

**Prayer**

Loving God

May we pause and find time

To meet

To let go that which distracts us

And seek the love we need

To hold us

Comfort us

Call us again

May we pause

And find wonder again

Shared in a love that is everything

Take a breath

In the grace that is given

To each one of us unconditionally

And rest in a presence

Beyond every other presence

Safely

Honestly

Generously

Loving God

We meet in your universal story of salvation

Of inviting us through

Into the generosity of life

Into your community

Of grace

Your company

Found between us all

And together

As we are

Together

With everything we carry

We meet

And pray

And say together

Our Father…

**Scripture Background**

By way of some background… there are always subtle things going on in passages such as this… It is the story of Jesus’ crucifixion… not what you’d expect on this Sunday… on the cusp of advent… but here we are… given a passage at the end of the church year… because traditionally the church year begins with Advent… a story that is about the end… We don’t even have a resurrection passage… The end of the year… ends with Jesus end…

And it is more than that… It is not just the end of Jesus physically… but the way the story is told… it is an attempt to bring to an end the idea of Jesus too… The sign over the cross… Here is the King of the Jews… and the words of one of the criminals beside him… If you are the Messiah… save yourself…

The idea is to suggest all the hopes the crowd had begun to place in Jesus had come to an end… the whole idea of Jesus… was finished on that cross… A line was drawn…that no one could cross…

Except… except… Well we don’t actually come to that part of the story… In fact the story begins again next week… so in many ways… this is part one… next week part two… We’re meant to imagine everything ends… and are left asking where is the good news… Come back next week to find out…

**Reading: Luke 23:33-43**

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. **34**Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots to divide his clothing. **35**And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!’ **36**The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, **37**and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’ **38**There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’

**39**One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ **40**But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41**And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ **42**Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ **43**He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’

**Reflection**

There are many pretenders in the world… many who seek power… who seek opportunity to lead… and we need leaders… of course we do…

We’ve seen many… recently… manoeuvre to be in the right place and the right time… to have power… and good luck to them… Thank goodness some still have a genuine pursuit of justice… and equality… and making the world a better place…

It is something I couldn’t do… I wouldn’t know where to start… so I am hardly in a place to criticise… though I do… we all do… out of frustration…simply being overwhelmed by the task that it is to be a leader in a very complicated and fickle world…

Then we have this Sunday… Reign of Christ… a peculiar Sunday if you ask me… (though you probably aren’t) … It implies power… authority… leadership… the things we are cynical of at the moment…

The issue is… Reign of Christ… feels just another way to seek power… establish authority… as if Jesus has a desire to rule… rather than to serve… because the story we offer today… speaks into the idea of power… but in a counter-intuitive way… and it is summed up in one line…

The line that has one of the crooks… crucified with Jesus… call out… If you are the Messiah… save yourself… and us…

‘IF you are the son of God’… If? … Well if he is… he could… so is he? … My head is now full of doubt… maybe he is not… That tiny word… ‘if’… So what kind of saviour is he… if he cannot save himself?…

Now we are all struggling with reason… and logic… It gets us thinking… doubting… none of which are bad… but we start trying to work out why… reason with the story… work out some logic why Jesus does not save himself… Indeed, what kind of Messiah is he…

And subtly… but dangerously… our whole way of believing begins to feel less secure… Now… instead of RELATING to Jesus… we begin to REASON with him… instead of using our hearts… we start using our heads… we move from love to logic… we’ve shifted how we relate to him…

And we end up trying to justify Jesus… trying to make excuses… and is this where we end up in our faith… arguing our case for Jesus… rather than following him…

If Jesus really is the son of God, why doesn't he save himself? … It suddenly becomes an urgent question… What does it mean to believe in a Saviour who doesn't save himself?… and my head is spinning in all sorts of directions… what if I can’t argue my way out of this one… What will my colleagues say… They’ll be laughing all the way to heaven… with the answers… and leave me behind… not fit… because I failed to argue my case… reason with the world… win the argument for Jesus…

But let’s just stop… pause… and take a breath…

Salvation is not an argument… Redemption is not a set of beliefs… It’s not even a onetime event on that cross… It is a relationship…

The relationship we have is about a loving commitment not a logical conviction… We persist in relationships, not because they are logical and reasonable… but because we are committed to creative bonds that ground everything important within other people…

The salvation of Jesus is not about a saviour who can climb down off a cross… The salvation of Jesus is about a relationship… that endures, survives, and persists through all circumstances… including that cross…

And there is the model of leadership this Sunday might offer the world… one based not on miracles… or logic… or argument… but one based in relationship… won… not by reason… but by grace…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

When you don’t come down from the tree

And you bear the pain and carry the burden

We know we can pray for the world

That you know so well.

On that cross we know you bear the conflict of the world

The hurt of Ukraine and Yemen

Syria and Afghanistan

Shaped by an understanding of power

That is not your own

On that cross we know you bear the hunger of the world

From Somalia and Haiti

To our own places of poverty and hunger

Unable to fill tables

With the basic needs of so many

On that cross we know you bear the violence done to others

Because of gender, sexuality, culture

Where folk hide themselves

Trapped in a cycle they cannot escape

Abused, lonely, afraid

On that cross we know you bear the hurt of creation

Where beauty and sustainability

Take second place to economy and wealth

A world not threatened by climate change

But a humanity who is

On that cross we know you bear the folk we love deepest

Family and friends

The sick and ill

Those with physical or mental ill-health

Worried about the cost of living and the future

When you don’t come down from that tree

We know you are with us

Our companion in the world

And you carry us and our world

In love and grace and hope

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**