

## **Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg**

**Preached by Rev Geoff Read on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025, Christ the King Sunday**

**Bible passage: Luke 23:33-43**

In the place we used to live in England, every Friday black bags could be seen outside every house

They were rubbish bags and would be collected by the rubbish collectors, thrown into the truck and taken away and dealt with

Usually you couldn't see inside the bags, what people were throwing away.

But sometimes bags had split you could see what was in them. Bits of rubbish sometime remained.

But usually it was a nice, empty pavement until the next Friday when it all happened again

Households were still producing rubbish that needed taking away week in, week out



The bags appeared every Friday, including on Good Friday, the day each year when we mark all that we have just read about - the crucifixion and death of Jesus

And that got me thinking ...

Thinking about Jesus the rubbish collector or as John the Baptist put it as he pointed at Jesus at the start of his three-year mission, "Behold the (One) who takes away the sin of the world ..." (Jn 1:29)

That is recorded in another gospel, John, and he uses the word "world" about everything and everyone in our experience of time and space

In other words, all the pain, the injustice around us

and all the failed desires in us, to be the best sort of people we deep down long to be, but fall short of again and again

John says that somehow this Jesus would come and deal with, take away, that stuff

And here we are at the end of that three-year mission seeing how He does that

But the thing is - you need to look really carefully

Because nothing of what was going on then was in any way a clue

We know it, two thousand years later because we know the end of the story, what happens three days later as Jesus is raised

But at the time the sign nailed above his cross by the Romans as they executed him - This is the King of the Jews. Well, that was just to them an insult

and for those who gathered with them it was the same

Religious leaders glad that the rocker of the boat, upsetter of the status quo, claimer of Messiahship, the special one to come in Jewish thought - they were glad to have Jesus off their hands. And so they mock him: He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one! (v35)

The soldiers, professional executioners do the same: 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' (v36)

And then there were the ones executed with him, next on death row, do the same - or at least one does: 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' (v39)

The other is different - whether from desperation or stirring faith, he says: we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' (v40)



Note how the reading begins and ends

As he is nailed to the cross Jesus says: 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' (v34)

Who is them? The "them" is not just those doing the hammering

It is also the leaders and soldiers standing by and scoffing - representatives of two systems of power, religious and political

and "them" is also the criminals, those alongside Jesus who, if they could, would be there carrying their big black rubbish bags for all to see

There were some others there that day

Don't overlook the people standing by watching - representatives of ordinary people, of you and me. Those who also have, if you like, rubbish bags, but have left them carefully at home, neatly stowed away

As it all begins Jesus says: 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'

And as it ends, the criminal who recognises the rubbish bag he carries also recognises One who might take it away from him

And so asks "remember me when you come into your kingdom" (v42) - do what you know is best for me .... which turns out to so much more than he can ask or imagine

For Jesus replies: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise' (v43) - without your bag

There are many ways that down the years Christians have tried to understand the cross, what is happening in this moment - each truth is like the facet of a diamond

Some say that somehow Jesus is hanging there on our behalf, standing in our place to deal with something we cannot

Others point us to how the on the cross Jesus is taking on, absorbing and defeating the powers of sin, death, the devil

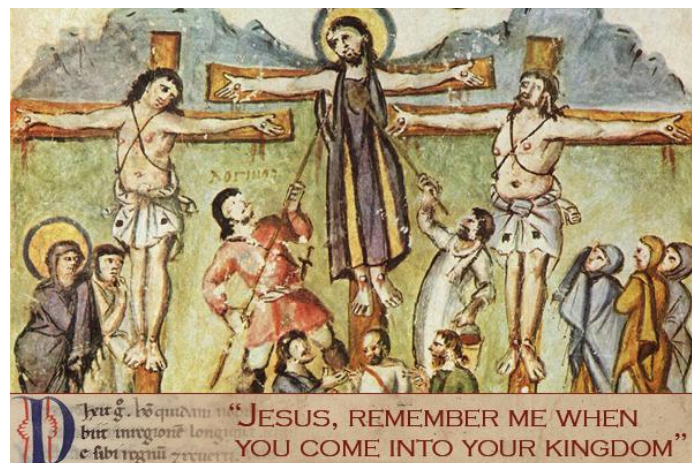
Others speak of forgiveness , reconciliation, freedom, life

Others say that from the cross flows the love of God, symbolised in water and blood flowing from His side, the love of God that transforms all that is wrong in the world around us and all the failed desires in us

All are true and all point to this - that what is happening on the cross is an amazing sort of love

But not just an example of love

It is the power of love actually doing something, a love which we need to not just know about, but actually know, desire, experience, receive - like that criminal alongside Jesus



And it starts with the same simple words uttered that first Good Friday: King Jesus, remember me

Remember me and my black rubbish bag

King Jesus, Jesus the One who takes away the sins of the world ... remember me also