

## Jesus, Remember Me

✦ as my suffering Savior (vv.35-39)

✦ as my glorious King (vv.40-43)

In the name of Jesus Christ our King, dearly redeemed:

What is the most shocking thing that ever happened to you? Most have heard my stories over the years. A fishing trip with my brothers and father near the mouth of Coos Bay – hearing the breakers, fearing we might be washed out to sea when the anchor stuck and nearly swamped the boat. Climbing the third highest mountain in Oregon, the South Sister, with a youth pastor who almost died up there. Leaving home at fourteen for a school I'd not seen, people I did not know. Helpful sermon illustrations, but nothing compared to the combat some of you have faced. With all due respect, no earthly battles no matter how bloody can compare with the combat of CHRIST THE KING who fought sin, death and hell to save us. We dig into the details during midweek Lenten services each Spring. But on this last Sunday of the Church Year, we see a most shocking sight and pray: **Jesus, Remember Me...**

✦ as my suffering Savior (vv.35-39)

The shock for family and friends is not mentioned here. Jesus has just consoled and warned the weeping women about God's impending judgment on Jerusalem and the world. The nails that tore through the flesh of His hands and feet were not as shocking as the torment to His soul. To be crucified between two criminals said something so wrong about Jesus. Yet He prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*" There's the real shock. Jesus was **suffering** from ignorance.

The ignorance was certainly not His own. From earliest youth, Jesus was well aware of His identity as God's own Son. He had to be in His Father's house about His Father's business even when His earthly parents scolded Him for staying at the temple too long. What shocked the soul of Jesus here was the ignorance of the people, and hateful ignorance at that. How could His fellow Jews watch while their officials "*sneered at him*"? "*He saved others; let him save Himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.*" Didn't they know their Old Testament Scriptures that foretold these things?

It would embarrass me to call for a show of hands. And it would embarrass most of you if I asked, "How many have read the entire Old Testament?" Some of you studied it in school, but have you read the entire Old Testament in the last year? I see the problem when I ask simple questions about key figures in the Old Testament. Only a few know what I'm talking about. Honestly, I have to read and listen to the Bible twice a year for my own soul and to keep growing in my faith or else I flounder. Don't criticize the ignorance of the Jews. We have enough of our own to say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

**Jesus, Remember Me** – in your **suffering** from mocking ignorance of the civil authorities. The soldiers weren't so hateful; they were just having fun. Is that any less shocking? They offered wine vinegar, which at first Jesus refused until His suffering was almost over. Everyone wants Jesus to save Himself, but if He did, we would be lost. I've never been in that much pain – physically, emotionally or spiritually. But the taunting to escape would make me end it. Yet Jesus is so filled with love, He won't.

**Jesus, Remember Me** – **suffering** from the truth of your identity. Do you ever have to hide your true identity? The worst scenario for us might be watching a football game as a Vikings fan across the river in a Packer backer bar. If they found out, you might have to run for your life, but what is that compared to this? Jesus is THE KING OF THE JEWS just as Pilate's mocking sign said. Yet He refused to run away, even though no one wanted a King who would suffer so. No one realized Jesus was hiding His glory as the divine King of the ages under His **suffering**. **Jesus, Remember Me...**

### ✠ as my glorious King (vv.40-43)

Jesus is the King of all creation. You have to wonder why He put up with this. When they came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' words were enough to drive the soldiers back and knock them to the ground. On the third day He would prove His invincible power over death itself. The crack troops of Roman guards would shake from terror and play dead when the Lord's angel rolled away the stone. Jesus Christ did not have to listen on the cross to *one of the criminals who hung there* beside Him and *hurled insults at him*: "*Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!*" But that's what Jesus was doing, saving us by sacrificing Himself, the King for His disloyal subjects.

**Jesus, Remember Me** – as my **glorious King** of patient endurance. You see that I have been sinful from the moment I was conceived in my mother's womb. You see how selfish I was as a baby when I acted as if the whole world revolved around me and my needs. You see how immature I still am, all these years later, when I fall into that same trap as if my happiness means more than the good and welfare of those around me. You see how blind I am to your blessings as I complain about the one thing that isn't the way I want. You see how easily I want to give up. But you refused to give up! You hung there on the cross in my place as my **glorious King** of patient endurance. You hung in there to deliver me from hell's torment for all eternity. By your patient endurance you give me courage and strength.

**Jesus, Remember Me** – as my **glorious King** of pure innocence. What the other criminal said was true when he rebuked the mocker: "*Don't you fear God...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.*" Four trials – two by Gentiles, two by Jews – even false witnesses could not prove a minor misdemeanor, much less a capital crime. Yet **my glorious King** was the most guilty criminal of all time. Isaiah said 700 years earlier, "*The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" (53:6) I feel guilty for single sins of thought, word and deed. God has never made me look at a day's worth of sin, much less my life. Yet all the guilt of all people of all time He heaped on the innocent head of **my glorious King**. He alone could bear the guilt for all mankind and save us from our sins. Was His sacrifice in vain for you?

Who knows where this dying thief was raised? Did he have parents who tried to teach him God's Word, only to have him turn away in stubborn rebellion and stop going to Sabbath worship? By his own admission he deserved capital punishment for his crimes. What made him so bold to pray, "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom*" ?

Miracle of miracles, God gave him eyes of faith to see beneath that bloodied face under the crown of thorns **my glorious King** who suffered for us all. Jesus remembered God's promise to our first parents in the Garden of Eden. He remembered that by His suffering and death, by His glorious resurrection He could crush the serpent's head and destroy the devil's work. **Jesus, Remember Me, my glorious King**

Do you ever feel that God has forgotten you? That He's so busy with more important things? That maybe your troubles don't mean much to Him? Are you ever afraid that your worries and cares are too foolish for Him to care, or listen, or help? Put yourself there in the place of that criminal who confessed his sin and simply asked CHRIST THE KING for remembrance.

**Jesus, Remember Me** – as my **glorious King** of truth. "*I tell you the truth*" – because Jesus is the truth for time and eternity. He will not wait to remember you tomorrow. He's not so busy that your troubles have to go on the back burner until He can get to them. Jesus is infinite in love and power to care for your tiniest trouble, to listen to your whispered prayer, to help when you feel helpless like never before. Not tomorrow, but He says, "*Today....*" He said to the confessed criminal: "*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.*" There was no purgatory, no purging place, no penance needed to get rid of guilt. It was all washed away in the blood of CHRIST THE KING who died for you and me. "*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.*" (Hebrews 4:7 NIV84) *The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day; And there have I, as vile as he, Washed all my sins away, Washed all my sins away.* (CW 112:2) **Jesus, Remember Me.** Amen.