

Luke 23:33-43

Storyteller:

Today's Gospel reading, from Luke's account, reminds us how Jesus is a King, different from other kings.

Listen as three Roman guards bring Luke's story to life:

Roman 1:

Something amazing happened. Myself and a couple other Roman guards were at that place they call The Skull, where many of the crucifixions are carried out. Ours isn't the greatest job, but it pays the bills. We had nailed these three men onto their crosses and lifted them up. One was the Nazarene called Jesus, and there were also two

hardened criminals, one on either side of Jesus, one on his right, and one on his left.

Roman 2:

Then Jesus says, to no one in particular, 'Father, forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing.' We don't pay that much attention, as it doesn't make much sense. We cast lots to divide his clothing. A bit of supplement to our wages. All the people are standing by, watching, as they do at a public execution.

Roman 1:

Then we overhear the religious leaders talking, scoffing at Jesus. They are saying things like, 'He saved others. Let him save himself, if he is the Messiah of God, God's chosen one!'

I'm not Jewish, but it doesn't sound like they like him very much.

Roman 3:

We weren't very nice either. Some of us soldiers also mock Jesus. One of us, I won't mention any names, comes up to Jesus and offers him sour wine.

Roman 1:

True confessions, I join right in with the other guards taunting Jesus, saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' Somebody even writes a sign saying 'This is the King of the Jews.' Then they hang it high on his cross, up over his head.

Guard 2

Then the three of them, hanging there on their crosses get into a bit of a conversation. It is the most astonishing thing. One of the criminals keeps deriding Jesus and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!'

Guard 3: Then the other criminal rebukes the first one, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds. But this man, Jesus, has done nothing wrong.'

Then the criminal speaks directly to Jesus saying, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'

Guard 2

It gets more astounding. Listen to this.

Jesus says, back to the criminal hanging there on the cross, ‘Truly I tell you. Today you will be with me, in Paradise.’

Amazing!

Storyteller:

Here ends the reading.

May God bless our hearing with understanding.