

## Wonderings (Intergenerational)

These are open-ended.

No right answers.

Allow silence.

- I wonder what it feels like that the last person Jesus speaks to is a criminal.
- I wonder how God's power looks when it shows up as compassion rather than force.
- I wonder which voice in the story you relate to today — the mockers, the thief, the silent onlookers, Jesus?  
Why?
- I wonder what "Paradise today" might look like in an ordinary place — a home, a ward, a classroom, a street.

## Prayer

Christ our King,  
whose throne is a cross  
and whose crown is mercy,  
help us to see your power  
in unexpected places.  
Teach us the strength  
of compassion,  
the courage to forgive,  
and the hope of "today."  
Remember us, hold us,  
and make us people  
who bring your kingdom  
through love that  
never walks away.  
Amen.

The Crucifixion, by Giambattista Tiepolo  
(Saint Louis Art Museum)



# HeartBeat

## Christ the King and the Paradox of the Cross

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> of November

Lectionary Reading:  
Luke 23:33-43



### Ice breaker:

Tell a story of a time when strength or leadership looked different from what you expected — gentler, quieter, or more vulnerable.

Or

Say something about a leader that you admire or respect.

## First Reading of the Text

Read Luke 23:33–43 aloud once.

Invite a time of silence

What word or phrase caught your attention?

No discussion yet — just offer the word or phrase.

## Second Reading of the Text

### (Notice More Deeply)

Read the passage aloud a second time, by a different voice if possible. Invite silence

### Ask:

What did you notice this time that you didn't hear before?

Again, no explanations — just noticing.

## Going Deeper into the Text

Move slowly, offering short insights with space for response. These are prompts, not a lecture.

### The Setting: Power Turned Upside Down

Luke's crucifixion scene is marked by gentleness, mercy, and presence.

Jesus is mocked, but Luke shows these taunts revealing truth.

### Prompt:

- Where in this passage do you see strength showing up in vulnerability?

### The Inscription: "This is the King of the Jews"

Rome meant it as humiliation. Luke hears it as proclamation.

The Cross becomes a throne of compassion.

### Prompt:

- What does kingship look like here? How is it different from human ideas of power?

## Forgiveness: "Father, forgive them..."

Jesus entrusts forgiveness to God.

This is a model for when we cannot forgive fully ourselves.

### Prompt:

- What might it mean in our lives to entrust forgiveness to God when we are not ready?

### The Two Criminals: Theology from the Margins

The "penitent thief" speaks truth more clearly than anyone: "We are guilty ... this man is innocent ... remember me."

He asks not for rescue, but for relationship.

### Prompt:

- What surprises you about the thief's request?
- What surprises you about Jesus' response?

## "Today you will be with me..."

In Luke, "today" means the present breaking-in of salvation. Grace is immediate. Not after improvement. Not after proof. Today.

### Prompt:

- Where might we need to hear a "today" in our own lives or communities?