Jesus: Master of the universe • Breaking open the word

Readings

2 Samuel 5:1-3
You shall shepherd my people Israel and shall be commander of Israel.

Colossians 1:12-20
He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Luke 23:35-43
He replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

You can read the full text of this Sunday’s readings here:

Scriptures for the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Cycle C

Reflection

The first reading hearkens back to the days of King David, the greatest king of Israel, and the one from whose line would come the Messiah. When God created the kingdom of Israel, it was God’s plan that God would be the king—not a human being. But, people being small and scared, looked around at all of the other nations and saw that they had human kings, so Israel asked for one, too. God told them that they only needed to follow him and everything would work out right. They continued to nag God, and God warned them that if they had a human king, they would not have peace and things would go wrong. They persisted. So, God gave them Saul. And the problems began.

David took over after Saul and God promised the people that someday a King would come from David's family to be the true king who would restore Israel to the way God intended it to be. The King, the Messiah (which means "anointed one"—Kings, Prophets and Priests were always anointed with oil as a sign that God chose them for service to their community), was Jesus.

The second reading, from the Letter to the Colossians, describes what Jesus is and what he has done for us. Jesus is the Light of the World, who brings us out of the darkness of sin, who makes us whole again, who is the image of God on earth, who created all things, and has authority over all things. Jesus made heaven available to us by his death and resurrection. We should take time to thank Jesus for all that he has done for us, and this reading reminds us of these things.

So, what Gospel did the Church choose to show the Kingship of Jesus today? The Crucifixion. For people who do not believe or understand what God is, this would look like God being weak. But, for us who believe, it is the most perfect expression of God's love for us. God has all authority over everything, and the way he chose to use it was to put it in our hands. God allowed us, in our fear, our anger, our brokenness to abuse the free will that God gave us and to sacrifice Jesus on the cross. But, it didn't end there! God used our actions to free us from our sins. When we had been as bad as we could be, God gave more, and offered us mercy in his love—just as he did with the good thief who asked for forgiveness. Jesus rose from the dead, and invited us to join him by choosing his love in this life so we could be with him in the next. In heaven, Jesus shares his inheritance with us freely. This is how God uses authority—by making it a gift to all creation.

Break open the word with your family

Kids

What do you think the world would be like if God was our King?

Teens

The inscription on Jesus' cross "This is the King of the Jews", was meant as a mockery. The Romans didn't realize it was true, or the fact that he had absolute authority over them, too. Do you ever forget that Jesus has perfect authority over you? How would your behavior and attitudes be different if you lived every day knowing that it was true?

Adults

The recent election, in good part, was about what sort of authority our country wanted to lead us. The polls were very much divided. What does the result of the election, and the whole process of campaigning tell you about the country's attitudes and assumptions about what political authority should be? How does your faith inform your attitudes and assumptions? What is your hope for the future of our country in this new era?

A little lectio

The ancient practice of prayerfully reflecting on bits of Scripture is known as *lectio divina*. Want to try it out with your family? Head over to Lectio Divina for Kids to find out how to adapt this prayer practice for your kids.

A little Bible study

Want to do a little Bible study with your kids? Here are some tips:

- During Ordinary Time, the Church pairs the Old Testament and New Testament readings in a way that each sheds light on the other. Ask your kids to look for the common theme connecting the two readings. (Sometimes it's obvious, sometimes it is subtle.) How does the "dialogue" between the readings help you understand them better?
- Get a New American Bible, Revised Edition, and take a look at the footnotes for these readings. How do they change your understanding of what is going on?
- Take a look at the context for the readings—what happens before, or after?
- Read the NABRE's introduction to the book of the Bible that the readings are taken from. How does that help you understand the readings?
- If you don't have a copy of the NABRE at home, you can view it online at the USCCB website at the Daily Readings web page.

For even more resources for breaking open this Sunday's readings, head over to The Sunday Website.