

Christ the King 2019 SML  
LK 23:35-43

We live in an era of revolutions, but the problem is which kind of revolution shall we espouse. Like all eras, ours has its catchwords and foremost among them is the word “freedom.” We live a world that divinizes the will, and holds that true happiness comes only when you have the freedom to do what you want, when you want, with whom and to whom you want, how you want, and where you want; and that any restraint to a higher authority is unjust, oppressive and to be defied. We want the freedom to keep all options open, not to be tied down, to always be ready to move on to something more attractive, to place conditions on all promises, to protect our own interests above all else, to move up and make more, and to demand rights and resist restrictions. We want freedom.

But when is a person free? When he is without law or restraint? When he attains the purpose for which he was made? For an answer to these questions, we turn to the Eternal Drama of the Cross.

The low, dark prison under Pilate’s fortress held many a captive soul. Aside from Jesus, there are three who attract our attention. The name of one we know for sure – Barabbas.

Tradition named the other two: Dismas, better known as the oxymoronic good thief, and Gestas, the bad thief.

When the sun rose on that particular Passover, all three hoped for freedom, for it was customary on the day of Passover to release a prisoner, recalling Israel's freedom from Egypt after the first Passover.

Pilate knew he would be called upon to pick a prisoner to be released, but his pick would become all the more urgent when Herod returned Jesus to Pilate. Both Pilate and Herod found Jesus innocent. But Pilate had Jesus on his hands and problem was how to get rid of him.

He had an idea. Politically it was a great idea. Morally, it was a rotten idea. He would have the people decide, between innocent Jesus and well known Barabbas, who was a robber says John (18:40) and a murderer says Luke (23:19).

When Pilate asked, "Which one do you want me to release to you, Pilate could hardly believe his ears. Barabbas could hardly believe his ears. Why? Because right is still right even when nobody is right, and wrong is still wrong even if every body is wrong.

Barabbas was amazed. He had fought for political liberty. He had procured a few quislings, had sabotaged Roman

works, organized a few followers and must have gained some prestige in being arrested. But all that added up to nothing compared to the shouts of the crowd, “Free Barabbas!”

Freedom, glorious freedom!

Barabbas was free in four ways:

1. Freedom from fear: no more Roman prisons
2. Freedom from want: no more stale bread and water
3. Freedom of speech: he could once more talk revolution
4. Freedom of religion: he could talk against religion; look how far religion got the Son of God?

Freedom for Barabbas meant freedom **from** something and it was an empty freedom. It was freedom to go wherever he wanted but he had nowhere to go and no one to go with him.

It was the oddest election in the history of the world:

- ✓ No torchlight procession for the victor
- ✓ No one hoisted him on their shoulders
- ✓ No mob followed the victor with cheers

Nope. Everyone followed the defeated candidate. To have the mob with him meant he had to follow the mob that followed Christ. He went back to prison to watch the scourging of the Defeated.

After the scourging, Barabbas followed the Defeated up the hill of Calvary; it was the only way Barabbas could have a following. And there were Barabbas' fellow prisoners, not so fortunate as Barabbas to be chosen by Pilate for release. They were crucified on either side of Our Blessed Lord, Dismas on his right, and Gestas on His left.

After the three crosses were erected against the dark sky, Barabbas heard Gestas cursing and swearing to be taken down. He also heard Dismas asking to be taken up.

“Remember me when you come unto your kingdom.”

Kingdom? Who said anything about a kingdom? Granted Jesus said plenty about His kingdom, but Dismas never heard Jesus preach. Here, Dismas looks upon what is seemingly a condemned criminal, but sees:

- ✓ A crown of thorns as His royal diadem
- ✓ Nails as His scepter
- ✓ Blood as His royal purple
- ✓ Crucifixion as His installation and coronation

And he asks to be remembered . . .

What kind of freedom was this with which Dismas was satisfied? Can one be nailed to a cross and still be free? Can He who was nailed to the center cross be the giver of freedom,

the savior of liberty? If Barabbas were a smart man, he would have realized the freedom he sought was not the freedom to do what you want, when you want, with whom and to whom you want, how you want, and where you want, freedom **from** something, but the only true freedom is to be free **for** something., freedom as a means, not freedom as an end; freedom **for** the sake of doing something worth doing.

1. What good is freedom from fear unless there is someone to love?
2. What good is freedom from want unless there is Justice to be served?
3. What good is freedom of speech unless there is Truth to defend?
4. What good is freedom of religion unless there is God to be worshipped?

If Barabbas were a smart man, he would have given anything to have been Dismas. Dismas was free, but he was not.

The Barabbases in the world would remake society to remake man. The followers of Christ in the world would remake man in order to remake society.

Learn, all those who talk at length about freedom in a land of freedom that the only true freedom is the freedom to be a saint!