



## **It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like... Easter**

**Pastor John Klawiter**

**November 20, 2022**

**Christ the King Sunday**

**Luke 23:33-43**

Grace and peace to you my friends in faith,

In just over a month, we will be gathering here (Christmas at Faith) and churches across the world to celebrate the birth of a Savior, humbly in the stable outside of an Inn. A family seeking shelter and asylum that's left out in the cold.

Our modern retelling of Christmas seems to forget some of those details and we get sucked into the commercial demands. Advent should be a peaceful time, yet it can be stressful and demanding.

At Faith, we'll be a place to worship where you can leave your stress and anxiety at the door.

But today, we aren't near a manger.... We're in the place known as the Skulls. Golgatha. The end of the story.

Hollywood has successfully used this formula. Have you ever watched a movie that began by showing you a scene of the characters at or near the end of the story? Memento, Saving Private Ryan, and the Notebook.

You get a taste of how the movie might end, then you're supposed to forget about it until... boom, the payoff and you understand how everything happened to get to this point.

Hollywood has mastered storytelling, but to me, one of the greatest stories of all time took place long before Spielberg or Scorsese, Spike Lee or Kathryn Bigelow.

It's a story that appears to end in tragedy. In death.

Two criminals flanking our hero who is dying in the middle.

This hero is even mockingly called a king. Those in charge of killing him call up to him, "if you're a king, save yourself." (scripture)

One of the criminals joins in, "if you're the Messiah, save yourself... and US!" (scripture)



Unlike the superhero movies we are inundated with, this hero doesn't save himself from dying that day. He doesn't gain superhuman strength and crush the cross and then help the other two down.

The other criminal gets it. He shouts across Jesus to tell the other guy to be quiet. "Don't you fear God? Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!"

Jesus isn't here to evade the very human reality of death. Jesus, whose miracles follow him wherever he goes, isn't here for one last "gotcha" special effect.

No, he speaks the truth. He will remember this man—and tells him "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."

Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Having said this, he breathed his last.

The end. A tragedy.

It's not really an American hero kind of story. We'd walk out of the theaters complaining about being let down. That was it? He just let himself be killed and doesn't fight back?

Episcopal Priest Robert Capon (picture) had this to say about the Americanized version of Jesus—the superhero Jesus:

The true paradigm of the ordinary American view of Jesus, is... Superman (picture of Jesus):

"Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. It's Superman! Strange visitor from another planet, who came to earth with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men, and who, disguised as Clark Kent, mild-mannered reporter, fighting a battle for truth, justice and the American Way."

If that isn't popular Christology, I'll eat my hat.

Jesus -- gentle, meek and mild, but with secret, souped-up, more-than-human insides -- bumbles around for thirty-three years, nearly gets himself done in for good by the Kryptonite Kross, but at the last minute, struggles into the phone booth of the Empty Tomb, changes into his Easter suit and, with a single bound, leaps back up to the planet Heaven. It's got it all -- including, just so you shouldn't miss the lesson, kiddies: He never once touches Lois Lane (slide of Lois Lane).



You think that's funny? Don't laugh.

The human race is, was and probably always will be deeply unwilling to accept a human messiah. We don't want to be saved in our humanity; we want to be fished out of it.

We crucified Jesus, not because he was God, but because he blasphemed: He claimed to be God and then failed to come up to our standards for assessing the claim. It's not that we weren't looking for the Messiah; it's just that he wasn't what we were looking for.

Our kind of Messiah would come down from a cross. He wouldn't do a stupid thing like rising from the dead. He would do a smart thing like never dying.”

The Jesus story doesn't fit in the superhero universe. That's where we fit in the story.

Life isn't about waiting for superheroes to come along and fix our problems. We have to work together. That's what Jesus taught us.

What were the plot points in Jesus' life?

1. Jesus teaches us to love our neighbors
2. Jesus looks to the margins and invites the outcast to follow him
3. Our lives are about more than our “stuff”

I completed my online stewardship form for our family this week. I love how our church lives out these plot points of Jesus life in our own congregation.

We spend the majority of our time learning these stories and applying these lessons to our lives.

In our efforts to do this, we face challenges and obstacles, not unlike Jesus did.

We live in society that encourages us to look out for oneself, is skeptical of outsiders, and values possessions.

But in this church, we strive to resist that temptation. This is your counter-cultural invitation to be something far bigger and better.

This church is a place to dream and be filled with hope—to know that someday, we will be with Jesus in Paradise... but in the meantime, how can we make this world Paradise for all that we encounter?

This work continues by getting out of our bubble. If things are going well for you, don't just assume that everyone has the same opportunities to be successful or has access to the resources they need.



Two Washington County social workers that Faith works with stopped by the office this week. They know about our willingness to step up when asked. They know about our work with the chronically unsheltered. The homeless.

They know that we walked down a path to consider Tiny Houses as permanent homes for the homeless, but the journey took a few unexpected twists.

They also have another idea. A big idea. They suggested I get in touch with one of my peers at Trinity in Stillwater, Pastor Chris Bellefeuille for the latest update.

Pastor Chris told me there's significant progress on an Emergency Housing project that would be in Stillwater—very near to the county offices and services—reducing one of the biggest barriers that Faith has run in to: transportation.

This Emergency Housing project will serve many critical needs for a system that is broken and needs creative solutions to stop the bleeding. During the pandemic, here's what the Washington County data shows:

- 50% of residents receiving emergency housing have a known disability
- 88% are white, 12% are black, indigenous, or people of color
- 30% are 55+ and average age is 56
- 100% are facing record costs and pandemic affected challenges

How can we support this? I asked.

Within hours, I was given a letter of advocacy to submit to the city leadership in Stillwater—and was asked to share the letter with citizens of Washington County to sign it and we'd turn all of them in at the same time.

There is some Holy Spirit work going on here.

Even though we aren't in Stillwater, the needs in Forest Lake are not shrinking—yet the services that are needed for unsheltered members of our community are in... Stillwater.

We are a vital partner in this. We are advocates. We can sign a letter. There are copies at the Welcome Desk and you can read the letter in the Tuesday church email before signing it.

Bring it in by December 4th, for our annual meeting, which is also the 2nd week of Advent. Half-way to Christmas (pic of Silent Night again).



A day where we celebrate the birth of a Savior. A family seeking shelter and asylum that's been left out in the cold, until finally, someone took compassion upon them and provided them shelter in an unusual, but safe place, in a stable. Amen.