

There is a two bit word used by people like me—people who are clergy and studied theology, the word is eschatology.

It you are thinking, well that's Greek to me, you're right!

Eschatology is a Greek word having to do with the end of time.

Eschatology is a strand of thinking about God, and the nature of God, that wonders: When all time and all life ends,

is wrapped up like a pretty package, will we be left with the impression that the giver of the gift is a generous God,

or will we be left with the impression that life was no gift at all,

but just a pretty box all wrapped up, with nothing inside but dead air.

Eschatology ponders where all life is headed:

is the end purposeful, drawing together all things in joy and completeness, or is it an end that simply turns the lights out on our universe,

with the creator saying to himself or herself—well wasn't that a nice little drama. Next?

Of course none of us can really know the answer to that question—is the winding down of all space and time a completion that is holy,

or is it an unraveling of a Gordian knot.

Is this life that we live purposeful, do we participate in a reality that is purposeful and holy, or is it simply a set of events, some of them good, some of them unpleasant

but ultimately having no larger purpose than to keep us alive one more day.

In some ways, eschatology asks the question: are we more like God,

or more like cockroaches.

Do we believe that there is a power that can draw all creation into perfection?

Including us? Or do we act like we are nothing more than cockroaches, waiting for the bottom of the shoe to squish us flat? ~~Cynics to the end.~~

One answer is the answer of the cynic, for whom hope is a foreign thing.

The other answer gives us hope and meaning and purpose.

Ultimately, whatever we believe about life will determine the choices we make as we live our lives. If we believe that, even with the suffering that accompanies human life, life is ultimately a gift, full of beauty that we can imitate, we live with hope as the fuel that gets us up in the morning and gives us the strength to not devolve into cockroaches.

On the other hand, if we believe that life is a cruel joke, a series of random events and the whole purpose is to get before you get gotten. Eat drink and be merry and carry a large stick so you can fight off the other cockroaches. If we live that way, the way of cynicism, maybe we might as well be cockroaches.

So, in the Gospel reading this Christ the King Sunday, Jesus hangs on the cross and on one side of him hangs a cynic and on the other, the more hopeful man.

A person who believes that humans are more like God than they are like cockroaches.

Between the two thieves, an innocent man has been nailed to a tree.

Cynicism hanging beside him on the one side, hope on the other.

It is almost as if Jesus, an innocent man, hanging there suffering between them, is asking us a question: Who are you, who do you want to be?

Will you be one who places your hope in God's goodness?

Or will you be one who lives your life as a cockroach—driven by base instincts only, rejecting any notion that we have been given the capacity to be nobler creatures.

On the tree hangs a question mark for us:

who will you be? What will you choose? Who are you?

It was the cynics of the world that put Jesus on the cross. The religious authorities playing it safe rather than claiming the true wisdom of Judaism.

It was the cynics of the world who thought was foolish for someone to

refuse to go along with the survival of the fittest scheme of the Roman Empire. Better to squash than to be squashed. Cockroach mentality.

The other thief, he had hope. He was more like the disciples who followed Jesus to learn how to love as God loves. He was more like the apostles who would spread the good news of God in Jesus Christ.

Even hanging there, that other thief saw dignity in Jesus. He saw purpose that was larger than self-interest.

It was love.

So there Jesus hangs, on that cruel cross,
between the too ultimate choices we must make about life, about ourselves, about the nature of God.

Do we choose cynicism or do we choose hope. Do we choose the cynicism that which brings death to the innocent bystanders of the world, or do we choose hope that brings new life to the world. Do we choose love?

Way, way back in the earliest part of scripture, we find the story of Moses giving his last instructions to the Jewish people as they are about to cross over into the promised land. We read that section of the book of Exodus in the summer.

As Moses finishes up his speech, he says these words:
I lay before you two pathways; the pathway that leads to life, and the pathway that leads to death. Choose the pathway of life, instructs Moses.

The choice, that ultimate choice
is the fork in the road where we choose between the life and death of the soul. Between cynicism and hope.

It is a choice we all must make.

Today, on Christ the King Sunday, the Church proclaim our allegiance to the path that leads to life. We proclaim that it is to the kingdom of godly hope we belong.

Our king is king of eternity and the universe.

And he is the king of our hearts.

One day he will draw all things to a close, healed and whole again. Even us. And in the meantime, before all that happens,

as the king of our hearts, he teaches us the ways of wisdom, love and hope; helping us to walk the pathway that leads to life of our souls.

That is what we proclaim this last Sunday of our Christian year,
that Christ our King

because he shows us the pathway that leads to true hope, and true life.

Life for the soul, and dignity for humanity.