



### Grains

“Faith without solidarity is dead.” –William Reiser’s paraphrase of the main theme of *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton

“To be a Church is to be in solidarity with all who suffer but we must remember that the gospel message is not ideological since it does not identify with any social form. It hopes against hope.” –Gustavo Gutierrez

### Field

33 When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 [Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. 35 And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." 39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." Luke 23:33-43

### Thoughts

We'll soon enter Advent, a time to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Yet here we are with this text about the same child as an adult dying on a cross. Following the church calendar, it feels like we are reading a book with a crucial scene from later in the main character's life at the beginning of the story. We're told about a sign on the cross announcing that our central character is a king, but it's part of the mockery, absent from the other crosses. With his pain and vulnerability exposed, our champion promises forgiveness. He really is a king but in solidarity with the people. We glimpse the greatness of the protagonist, a reason for not putting the book down or going to sleep.

Jesus' promising paradise to the man next to him, hanging in shame for crimes he actually committed, is only in Luke. We get a final sense of the vision of the author as we get ready to enter the year of Matthew. It's a vision of Jesus who is always seeing in a new way. The man next to him wasn't only a criminal but a human being with dimension, someone who had messed up but could be forgiven and experience God's goodness. Jesus is often shown standing in solidarity with were those written off, not based on their status of being discarded but on what more he could perceive in them. That "what more" outweighed convention, or what crowds shouted out, or how certain laws defined.

Part of being in solidarity has to do with how we envision one another and knowing that we are seen by God. On Reign of Christ Sunday or Christ the King Sunday, whichever title resonates with you, may you know the spiritual power of Christ's solidarity with us and through us.

Happy Monday!

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Many Blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy