

King James – not the Bible version but the basketball player – remember him? It was only a year ago that all of Cleveland was bowing down to King James – hoping that he and our fair city would be crowned with an NBA Championship in 2010. A year ago the whole world had its eyes on Cleveland – Cleveland counted for something because King James played basketball here. And when Cleveland is honored all of Northeast Ohio basks in the glory. Everyone holds her head a little higher, walks a little taller because our team is victorious. It was all to be because of King James.

But the Cavaliers lost to Boston - King James signed with Miami – almost immediately the King James billboard came down. LeBron was king in Cleveland no more. Winter will be grayer in Cleveland this year. But it was fun while it lasted.

The way it must have been fun with King David was leading Israel's army to victory after victory over the enemies of God's chosen people. David who had toppled the mighty Goliath with only slingshot and a stone. David who gathered the scattered tribes of Israel into one kingdom and brought them prosperity and honor and glory.

When in years to come when David was only a distant memory and Israel was divided into two kingdoms, then conquered and foreigners ruled over them as kings, God's people longed for the Messiah – for the son of David who would bring glory and wealth and honor to God's chosen people once more. Some had hoped Jesus was the one – the promised Son of David. Crowds gathered around him. The sick and the lame and the blind came to him – were healed and blessed by his word, his touch. The hungry feasted on a little bread, a few fish and all were filled, all were satisfied – more than five thousand. He turned no one away because they were unworthy of him – children, women, foreigners, sinners – he welcomed them all. No wonder they lined the way as he rode on a donkey into Jerusalem, They cried out, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord." Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

Messiah Jesus – in Greek the word is Christ – Christ Jesus – King Jesus.

“Two others, also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called the Skull, they crucified him there with the criminals. And they cast lots to divide his clothing. 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!’ The soldiers also mocked him saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews save yourself!’ There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’ One of the criminals there kept deriding him saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.’ ”

King Jesus? Hanging naked on the cross, dying. King Jesus? What kind of a king would let this happen to himself?

One of the criminals knew that Jesus was a king for him – “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”

Jesus replied, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Is Jesus only a king for those who have crossed over into death? Had God not raised Jesus on the third day it might have been so. LeBron James, David, Donald Trump the kings and rulers of this realm, Jesus ruler of the realm to come. But God raised Jesus to be Lord of all, Lord of the dead and of the living. Your Lord and king and mine.

Someday, beyond the grave a lot of things will not matter much – how high you can leap and how many houses you own, and how attractive your appearance and how much money you can accumulate. Someday, beyond the grave the only measure will be the love of Jesus for each one.

For those who like that criminal on the cross are not ashamed to trust in Jesus the love of Jesus for each one is the only measure that counts now, already. This congregation exists to proclaim that love through our words and deeds. Love in the Name of Christ exists to help us in living the love of Christ for those who are facing tough times.

Some still mock the king who was crucified. Some still think that glory and power and honor in this world are all that matter. But you know that the love of Jesus is what truly matters now and forever. Amen.