

HOMILY

The Solemnity of Christ the King *November 25, 2007*

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After working for years on an exceptionally large piece of marble, Renaissance sculptor Agostino D'Antonio gave up the task. "I can do nothing with it," he sighed. The stone was discarded and lay on a rubbish heap for forty years. One day, Michelangelo came upon the stone and immediately saw its possibilities. He arranged to have it brought to his studio and began to work on it. Within three years, his artistic insight and talent were met with success. From that seemingly worthless piece of stone, he carved one of the worlds masterpieces of sculpture—*David*.

So it was with another David, son of Jesse, who lived about twenty-five centuries before Michelangelo. Few would ever have thought him to be destined for greatness. Fewer would have thought him to be "kingly material." When Samuel was sent to the home of Jesse, even David's father did not think him a likely candidate for leadership. While he presented each of his other sons, he left David in the fields tending his flocks. Yet God, who sees the latent possibilities in even the most unlikely people, designated David, the shepherd and youngest son of his father, as king.

Just as God saw something quite special in David, closer to home, God sees something in us. God sees something in us worth saving. I wonder why? After all, we are not all that great.

It's an awesome thought. God sees something in us? Many of us think of ourselves like Linus in that old *Peanuts* cartoon. Linus is looking at his hands one day. He says, "These are magnificent hands! These are hands that may create incredible works of art. These are hands that may one day shape the course of history. These are hands that one day may hold the future of the world."

Lucy, the inevitable spoilsport, walks over, looks at his hands and says, “They’ve got jelly on them.” My hands have jelly on them. Don’t yours? And yet God loves us. With all our imperfections, all our sins, God loves us. God sees something in us worth saving!

And that is why God sent Jesus. Jesus hangs on a cross between two thieves. One of them hurls insults at Jesus. “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebukes him. “Have you no fear of God? For you are subject to the same condemnation. We have been condemned justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, *“I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Friends, the second thief is you and me. We come this day confessing that, without God’s love and mercy, we have no hope. But because God loves us and sees something in us that is worth saving, we have abundant hope about life, even about death and about life beyond the grave.

Ten years ago next month, a young man in Paducah, Kentucky, took a gun to school and killed seven of his classmates. Parents came from all over the community frantically praying a parent’s most heartfelt prayer: “Not my child. Please don’t let anything happen to my child.”

One mother’s prayer was not answered that day. Her son died in the shooting. In spite of her shock and grief, the mother didn’t hesitate when doctors asked if she would donate her son’s organs to someone else in critical need. Many months passed and the mother discovers that some of her son’s organs went to a Methodist pastor. She contacts him and asks to meet. The day of their meeting, the grieving mother and the grateful pastor talk and pray and celebrate the life of the precious son who died. And then the mother asks one question, “Can I put my ear to your heart? Can I hear my son’s heart beating one more time?”

When God wants to hear his son’s heartbeat, God puts his ear to our chest. Christ died that we might live. That’s how lovable we are. Are you tired of living an inferior life? Are you ready to be the best you can be? Your life matters. God’s grace covers even you and me.