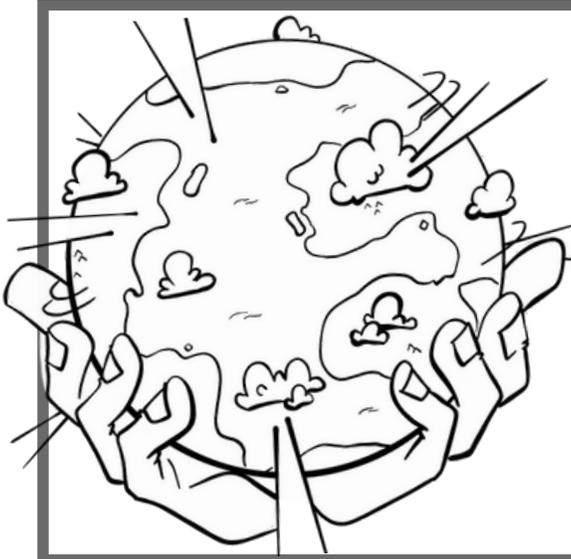




**MALACHI 3:13-18; COLOSSIANS 1:13-20; LUKE 23:27-43**

Today is the last Sunday of the Church year, and the final Sunday before Advent. And as we consider Jesus the Christ, who is our King, and who will come again on that final day, we also consider His reign from the cross and His words of promise to the thief in Luke 23.

**Teaching the Image**



The first image for the learning pages is a representation of a pair of hands holding the earth. This image is meant to represent God's hands and the fact that He is in control. This image could be used to teach on the end times, or suffering, and how God is in control even when we may feel like He is not. This image could also be used to teach the second lesson for today from Colossians 1:13-20. St Paul writes how Jesus is first among all powers, and that He was there at creation, and it is He who has won for us salvation. He is the King and Ruler over all.

**MALACHI 3:13-18**

Last week we read from the final portion of Malachi 4. This week we step back a chapter and hear the prophet Malachi speak of God's law and the Book of Remembrance. Verse 13 begins with God proclaiming how His people have spoken against Him and have felt it offers no benefit to serve and obey God. Malachi 3:16 then tells us of the book of remembrance and that God remains faithful and remembers and delivers those who do fear and obey Him. Our service, like those of Israel, may not bring earthly rewards in all circumstances, yet God promises that His people are His "treasured possession" and that He will deliver them (v.17). God assures us that to those who fear Him, their service is not without purpose or benefit. God's many gifts, like grace, faith, and opportunities to serve, are blessings from God and we can celebrate and give thanks for His grace and mercy.



## COLOSSIANS 1:13-20

As we look to the end times, and the coming of Christ our King, Colossians 1:13-20 presents us with St. Paul's letter to the Colossian church and teachings on Christ as preeminent, first. After St. Paul greets the Colossian Christians and assures them of his prayers for them (1:1-14), Paul announces the universal importance and authority Jesus has and the reconciliation (the making right between God and humanity) that Jesus brings by His death and resurrection. St. Paul shows the lordship of Jesus by teaching on the created order. Jesus, true God and Man, the second member of the Trinity, not only created all things, but rules all things- and He rules His church. And this God, the first over all things, came and died for you and for me so that we may have salvation and hope in Him.

## LUKE 23:27-43

The gospel reading opens with Jesus, already condemned, now carrying His cross to the place of execution. Luke records for us Jesus' words of warning to the women and crowds about what will come. Christ knew of the suffering to come for Jerusalem and His people, just as He knows the trials people throughout the ages have faced and do face. We see His concern not being for Himself, but for His people even in the midst of tragedy.

Verses 32-38 show us Jesus, now on the cross, pained and suffering, and yet praying for those who are crucifying him. Despite the physical, emotional, spiritual, and even social pain He endured, Christ' love for His people, even those who are mocking Him, is miraculous.

Even when His Kingship is mocked, such as the sign hung on the cross over Him, Christ, the King of Kings, fulfills His purpose to bring not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual, heavenly, eternal salvation and citizenship by grace through faith.

Verse 39-43 give us the account and interaction of Jesus and the thief on the cross, which is recorded only here in the gospel of Luke. Jesus is crucified with two criminals, and as they are on the cross one criminal rails against Jesus to save Him and them physically from their punishment. The other criminal, aware of Jesus' innocence and also his own guilt, rebukes the other criminal and admits his own guilt and belief in Christ as the Messiah and King. Jesus' compassion is evident as He proclaims to the thief on the cross, as they are about to die, those powerful words, "today you will be with Me in paradise." (v. 43)



### Teaching the Image

This image is a cartoon representation of the soldiers mocking Jesus as He is on the cross.

The emphasis when teaching this image would be to highlight Jesus' words from the cross,

*"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."*

Jesus' grace for us sinners is an amazing gift, and even when mocked, He prayed and loved.