

Sermon for November 25, 2018
Christ the King Sunday
“Are You a King?”

John 18:33-37

Pilot's question to Jesus is very direct. "Are you a King?" In our minds we interrupt the action to say, "He is the King." He is the King of Kings. Jesus is the son of God. He is the ruler of my heart. How blind of Pilot not to see and respect the royalty standing before him. If we were there we would answer that question for Pilot: "Pilot, Jesus is a King greater than you or Caesar." "And if you don't show some respect, you'll get yours."

Today is Christ the King Sunday. This is the day that Christians all over the world and through the centuries celebrate Christ's Kingship. On this day we remember that Jesus is King and that he has royal authority over our hearts. We sing hymns and read psalms that proclaim Christ as the Messiah. "All hail the power of Jesus' name, let angels prostrate fall." "Crown him with many crowns..."

That is our answer to Pilot's question. But we are not here to hear our answers. We are here to hear Christ's answers. Before we answer Pilot's question, let's listen to see what Jesus says. Then we as faithful subjects can respond.

Listen to what Jesus says: "So, Jesus, are you the King of the Jews?" "Do you think I am or have others called me that?" "Am I a Jew? Don't play games with me. I didn't say you were a King. Your own chief priests handed you over to me. Why do they want you dead?"

Jesus seems evasive, perhaps cautious is a better word. He wants Pilot, and anyone else listening in, like us, to understand his answer. So, Jesus gives a qualified answer, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Our first thought is that he means his Kingdom is in Heaven. But wait, isn't Jesus also King here on earth. We are on earth and we claim him as our King. The Bible tells us that when he comes again, he will reign here on earth. Perhaps he means that his Kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. In this world kings have soldiers that weld swords and guns to defend their king. But Jesus' followers don't carry weapons of violence to defend him.

What kind of a King is this who has no territory and whose subjects do not kill for him. Pilot asks him, "So you are a king?" Jesus' answers: "I came to proclaim the truth and those who are of the truth listen to me." Jesus may not have a territory or militia, but he has authority. Those who are loyal to the truth of God listen to him and do his bidding. Jesus is King to all who are loyal to the Truth with a capital "T."

This short dialogue helps us understand Christ as King, but you have to look at Jesus' life to get the full picture. Christ the King is categorically different from the kings of this world. The kings of this world rule over their subjects with fear and terror. Christ's rule is based on self-sacrificial love. In this world kings demand that their subjects be under their feet. But Christ our King washes the feet of his subjects.

The difference between Jesus' rule and the rule of earthly kings is as different as day and night. In this world kings, and queens, live and die by the rule that might makes right. But Jesus lived and died; and lives again by a different rule. His rule says that the poor are blessed. His rule says the meek shall inherit the earth. His rule says do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In this world rulers crush the poor and slaughter the innocent just as Herod slaughtered the children in Bethlehem. Our Lord gave up his life to redeem the outcast, the sinner, the forgotten ones.

The world sees our king hanging on the cross and sneers, "If you are a king save yourself." They think he is powerless. But they are wrong. Jesus has power, but it is not the power of swords and spears. It is not the power of fear and hatred. It is not the power of missiles and bombs. It is the power of the cross. It is the power of truth. Truth doesn't need weapons, it is a power unto itself.

There are many in our world who claim the power of truth. They claim dominion and authority over what is true and good. But often times they proclaim something less than what Jesus proclaimed. They use words like "truth" and "goodness," "decency" and "righteousness;" even "Christian." But what they say adds up to something less than the truth of God.

Jesus is the King of truth. He is the one who decides what falls under his banner of truth. He is the authority that defines what is true and false. Jesus is the very incarnation of Truth itself. As his subjects and members of his Kingdom, we should always test any alleged statement of the Truth. Just because someone says it is truth, doesn't make it so. We must always ask ourselves, "How does it compare to the life and proclamation of Christ our King?"

Leaders, and would be leaders, of our world will make claims to the truth. They will make stirring campaign speeches. They will use words like "decency," "justice," "righteousness;" even the word "Christian." They will use common values to argue for their programs and platforms. Some will even claim to be defenders of the truth and the good.

Be skeptical. No political program can embody the truth as we know it in Christ. Platforms are created by humans, and humans devise flawed plans. No political party can owe its allegiance totally to God and God's Kingdom. God's reign is unlike the power of any government or party.

Don't get me wrong, as Christians we can choose one candidate over another. But only after careful scrutiny of what someone stands for. Jesus said, "blessed are the poor." Does their stance bless the poor? Jesus was merciful, to the point of death; do they stand for mercy? Jesus said "do unto others as you would have them do unto you;" does their political agenda agree with the law of love? Jesus lifted up and blessed the little ones; does their program lift up and bless the weak?

If you meet a candidate that claims to embody Truth, be careful. If anyone claims to be the King of Truth, remember who they really are. They are mere pretenders to the throne. There is only one King of Truth. And he is unlike any other King. His power and rule are not enforced by soldiers and guns. The only territory he has is the hearts of the faithful. He is Christ The King.