

Sermon – “A DIFFERENT KIND OF KING”

November 22, 2009

John 18:33-37;

19:1-3, 14b-16, 19

I want to talk to you today in a simple way about The King...

Your King. My King.

That won't be easy.

For we don't have kings like folks did centuries ago –
kings who lived in castles, sat on thrones, wore crowns, held scepters,
and ruled whole nations with a word of command,
like King Arthur or King Henry VIII.

Our world is run by Presidents and CEOs, not kings.

When we DO talk about kings, we're not usually talking politics.

Instead, we might be talking Music:

You older folks remember the King of Swing – Benny Goodman.

When I was a teenager, “The King” meant Elvis Presley, the “King of Rock
and Roll.”

A generation later it was Michael Jackson, the “King of Pop.”

Or we might be talking Sports:

The Sacramento Kings, an NBA team that isn't very kingly right now,
or, in years past,

“The King and His Court” – the world's best softball team, with pitcher Eddie
Feigner, who threw a ball faster than any other human has ever thrown it!

We might be talking food – Burger King!

or movies – The Lion King!

or playing cards – four kings is a pretty fair poker hand, isn't it?

So if I talk to you today about The King, I risk being misunderstood.

But I must try,

because no matter what era we live in,

no matter what political system we live under,

we human beings need a King!

Without a king, there is no MORAL STANDARD.

No one to say “This is right and this is wrong. This is true and this is false.”
Everyone does what he pleases.

When there was “no king in Israel” says the Book of Judges,

“every man did what was right in his own eyes.”

The way lots of people live today!

Without a King, there is no PROTECTION when evil days come and enemies attack.

No one to rally the troops, no one to plan the battle or lead the fight.

When there is no King, chaos rules.

Are you experiencing some of that Chaos, or at least seeing it around you?

So I talk to you today, this last day of the church year, about the King.

Your King. My King.

His story is the Greatest Story Ever Told.

This morning I read to you one small scene in that story – the moment of His coronation, as told by John the Evangelist:

READ THE TEXT

As He stands there before Pilate, the Roman Governor, early on a Friday morning,
He does not look like a king at all...

His crown?

A rudely-made circle of thorn branches

His royal robes?

A tattered purple cloak tossed over His shoulders by soldiers,
who’ve beaten him bloody out in the courtyard.

His scepter?

For a few moments a reed was placed in his hand,
before they grabbed it away to clobber him over the head!

His throne?

Last Sunday he sat upon a donkey, later this morning He’ll be lifted on a cross,
an instrument of execution!

In our terms, imagine a king enthroned on an electric chair!

Pilate could not believe the charge brought against this man by His enemies:
“He calls Himself a King!”

They meant to say, “He’s a rebel!”

They meant to say, “We already have a king – Tiberias Caesar!”

But what they mostly wanted to say is, “We don’t want Him as our King!”

Pilate heard their accusation. Then he took a good look at Jesus.

What Pilate’s eyes saw was a weak, small, pathetic imitation of a King at best.

“Are you.... are you the King of the Jews?” he asked.

It ranks as one of most ironic scenes in all history.

The true King in fetters. His judge in search of Truth, but unable to see it standing in front of his face!

And when, at last, Jesus is crucified, the sign that Pilate puts over his head, the sign that specifies His crime, becomes the final witness of an astounding truth, that He is who he says He is!

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS

Pilate bore witness. He told the truth, and he didn’t even know it!

But you know it, don’t you? You know what happened afterward, how things turned out in the end. For history has rendered the verdict.

On the wall in my office hangs a plaque with these words:

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman.

He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty.

Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book, he never held an office,
he never had a family or owned a house.

He didn’t go to college. He never traveled more than 200 miles
from the place where he was born.

He did not do the things one usually associates with greatness.

He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against him.

His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies and went
through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing,
the only property he had on earth.

When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that
ONE SOLITARY LIFE.

Jesus is King, but what a different kind of King!

Worldly kings gather wealth. Jesus distributes it.

Worldly kings rule with Force. Jesus rules with love and Grace.

He's different.

In the Gospel of John,

we are invited to see with different eyes. To see that He has a Kingdom, but not the usual sort, not a kingdom "of this world."

He appears to be on trial before Pilate.

But it is really Pilate and the crowds outside who are on trial.

Jesus stands with lordly calm. He knows who He is and where He is going.

He speaks to Pilate:

"I am a king!

I came into the world to testify to the truth."

Jesus' life appears to end in crucifixion.

But John tells us that on the cross, Jesus is being "lifted up" to rule!

"But I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men to myself."

For Jesus is in fact the King.

His Kingdom is all those who serve and follow Him.

He speaks of those who are His servants, and that's where this text gets very personal. Let me put it to you...

Are you one of them?

Will you follow Him, or not?

Will you accept Him as King, or not?

That's the issue in this little part of the Great Story.

In these verses we see the confrontation between Jesus and the World.

Pilate represents the worldly “Powers That Be,”
trying desperately to brush away this bothersome fellow
so he can get back to politics as usual.

And the crowds outside? Ah, you are in that crowd, and so am I.
The crowd wants to do...well, it wants to do whatever it pleases, without
His interference.

As John describes the scene in chapters 18 and 19,
Pilate shuttles back and forth – seven different times!
Out and In, Out and In, Out and In, then Out one last time,
like a restless soul running hither and yon, feeling itself under judgment.

What Pilate asks the Crowd out there
is really what God is asking us in here: “What shall we do with Him?”

I ask once more. What will YOU do with Him?
That’s the question that needs answering here at the end of this church year,
and much more importantly, before you get to the end of your life.

What will you do with him?

Many people have already made up their minds.
Did you see the story about the ads placed on the sides of Tri-Met buses in Portland?
Ads placed by the atheists in our community...the words say:

**ARE YOU GOOD WITHOUT GOD?
MILLIONS ARE.**

They might as well have written, “Away with Him! Crucify Him!” on the sides of
those buses.

But before we get too upset with those people,
ought we not ask whether, by our actions, we are saying the same thing?
That we are “Good without God”. Fine just as we are.

Unwilling to make the changes and the sacrifices that come with serving Him
as our Master.

Or so distracted by the events of your personal life
or the squabbles that break out in the church that you say,
“I’m going to sit on the sidelines and wait it out – wait till there’s peace.”

No. He is King now, and He calls for us to follow here, and now, in all the chances and changes of life,
in the midst of every unsettled or unsettling situation in our family, our church, our nation.

Not spectators sitting in judgment, but the King's own men and women, instruments of His peace.

There were a few that day who gave Him their allegiance, you know.

The Penitent Thief.

The Centurion in the crucifixion detail.

Both saw with different eyes. Eyes of faith.

“Yes,” they said. “He is what that sign says. THE KING OF THE JEWS.
And now He is My King too!”

Won't you see Him that way too?

He came to be your King of Grace and Hope and Peace.

To give you all that He has. Will you acknowledge Him as your King?

One day every tongue will say it. Every knee will bow.

The cry will echo round the universe at last: JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!

Some who ignored and rejected him will say it in FEAR and REGRET.

Others who trusted and waited for Him will say it with unspeakable JOY...

How much better to give Him your allegiance NOW –

to know His pardon for all that has been wrong,

His power for living in challenging times,

His peace that passes understanding!

Your King has come. He will come again.

Let us worship Him, follow Him, and share Him while there is time.

In the name of Jesus, the King. Amen.