

Christ the King  
November 21, 2021  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
John 18:33-37  
**Christ Came As King**

**John 18:33–37 (NIV84)**

*Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” <sup>34</sup> “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” <sup>35</sup> “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” <sup>36</sup> Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” <sup>37</sup> “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”*

Dear Friends in Christ,

If you’ve been following the news even a little bit recently you are probably tired of hearing about courtrooms, judges, juries and so on. Well, too bad, because the text for the last Sunday of the church year is a court case. But this trial is different than ones in our system of justice. Today, we go back 2,000 years to the trial of Jesus before Pilate.

The Jewish leaders are the prosecutors but they don’t seem to be in the room. There is no defense attorney for Jesus. There would have been some soldiers in the room and Jesus was likely bound with ropes or chains. Pilate is the governor, the judge and the jury in his courtroom. He controls the soldiers. He will give the verdict. Pilate has all the power, or so it seems. Jesus is just the poor son of a carpenter from a nothing town called Nazareth. Jesus does not look or talk like any ruler of his time. He has no army and those who follow him are fisherman and the undesirables of society. And yet, Jesus has all the power in that courtroom. For Jesus came into this world to be our King. One day he will exercise his power over all things when he returns in glory to be Judge of the living and the dead. Until then he exercises his power through the truth.

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Pilate did not understand. The Jewish leaders did not get it. Even the disciples missed it. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world. It is difficult for us who live on the earth to think of a kingdom that is not of this world. We measure kingdoms and power by things we can see and measure and count. What is the GDP of the kingdom/nation? What is the size and strength and technology of their military? How much food do they produce? What kinds of natural resources, human resources, medical technology,

education, government system, leaders, and so on does that nation have? We can measure and count and evaluate a kingdom based on earthly things. But the kingdom of Christ is not easily measured.

Paul tells us in Romans (14:17), “The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” How can we measure righteousness, peace and joy? It is easier to measure economic power, military might, and technological advances. In Colossians (1:14), Paul tells us, “He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” We are brought into the kingdom of Christ by being rescued from the kingdom of darkness and this rescue is effected through the forgiveness of sins. How do you measure forgiveness of sins? We can measure unemployment numbers and gas prices but forgiveness is not something we measure. Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world. Therefore Pilate and the Jewish leaders and many others have pushed it aside, ignored it and rejected it, preferring to focus on the kingdom of this world.

We are not immune from this worldly way of thinking. Believers can become so passionate about politics that love, joy, peace and forgiveness are pushed aside by hate and angry discussions over Thanksgiving dinner and over social media. Do we spend more time and effort studying from our preferred news source about this world than in the Word of God that tells us how Christ rescued us from the darkness of sin and death and brought us in his kingdom? Some believer will join in the chants filling football stadiums and concerts, the chant that seems like innocent encouragement but is actually a vile phrase of hate directed at the current president. Others joined in similar chants of hate for the former president. Are we really that wrapped up in this world that we let a worldly leader ruin the love, peace and joy given to us as part of Christ’s kingdom?

And there Jesus stands before a cruel governor for a cruel and violent empire and he does not resist. Jesus stirred up no rebellion against the governor Pilate or King Herod. Jesus spoke no words of hate against his earthly rulers. The charge the Jews brought against Jesus was that he was trying to subvert the Roman government, that Jesus was trying to overthrow the earthly rulers and become king himself. Even Pilate saw that the Jewish leaders were lying to him. Even Pilate could see that Jesus was no threat to the Roman rulers. Pilate thinks it is because Jesus is weak. The truth is that Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world.

The good news for all of us who forget this truth, for all of us who look more to what we can count and measure in this world, is that Jesus has come as our King.

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The eternal Son of God was not going to let some puny, weak leader like Pilate stop him from carrying out the reason he was born and came into this world. Herod the Great tried to stop Jesus from becoming king by killing all the boys around Bethlehem. But Christ would not be stopped by a weak human like Herod. Jealous Jewish leaders would not keep Jesus from fulfilling his mission as king. Many thought they could stop Jesus from being king and in a way they did. He was not a king like Herod or Pilate. He

was not a high priest like Annas or Caiaphas. But Christ's kingdom is about the King who sacrifices himself to redeem sinners. In the kingdom of God, the most powerful ruler gives himself as the payment for the sin of the world. Christ the King brings sinners into his kingdom by dying as our substitute. And Christ did this even for Pilate and Herod and the Jewish leaders and the soldiers who nailed him to the cross and for you and me. This is the truth Jesus came to accomplish and proclaim. Every sinner is saved, rescued from sin and death through the blood of Christ the King.

Our King says, *"Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."*

With these words, Jesus invites Pilate to believe the truth and be saved. Pilate wants nothing of a kingdom not of this world. He does not want the one and only truth that matters for eternity. He only wants what is practical at that moment. Handing Jesus over to be crucified seemed the best way to keep his power and the earthly peace in Jerusalem so he gives the order for Jesus to be executed.

My friends, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you believe the truth that Jesus accomplished and proclaimed for you. Through the gift of faith, you are on the side of the one truth that matters for life and eternity. You have been forgiven and given righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Jesus says to you, *Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*

So listen to Jesus. Listen to him when your blood pressure begins to rise because of the latest political decision from Washington. Those in congress and the senate and the white house are not the ones with true power. Christ is King and we are part of his eternal kingdom no matter who sits in the white house or what dictator rises to so called power in this world. Listen to the Word of truth in the Scriptures when your grocery bill goes up or income goes down. You are part of an eternal kingdom with Christ as King. The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Jesus will provide all we need until he provides more than we can imagine in heaven. Listen to your King for peace with God. Listen to your King for the joy of salvation. Listen to your King for the forgiveness of sins. His truth sets us free.

Next Sunday we begin a new church year. Advent begins as we anticipate and celebrate the arrival of our King as a baby and his arrival as King on the Last Day. Though we did not see Jesus at his birth and we have not yet seen him return in glory, Christ is still the King.

Amen.