

Last Sunday of the Church Year, B (2012)

Text: John 18:33-37

Title: Christ the King

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The king of this world was Caesar, the Roman Emperor. Caesar had all the power. Caesar had all the armies. Caesar controlled Europe from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, and much of northern Africa. The entire Mediterranean world was his.

Pontius Pilate was Caesar's man. He was Caesar's representative in this part of the world. The Emperor Tiberius had sent him to Jerusalem to keep the peace in this part of the world, and to keep the Jewish people under control.

Pilate wasn't a king. He had no power of his own. But he still had all the trappings of power. Pilate had the palace and the fancy robes. Pilate had troops under his command. Pilate's word was law in this corner of the world. Pilate wasn't a king, but he looked like one, he acted like one, and Jesus' life was in his hands.

Jesus, on the other hand, didn't look anything like a king.

He was a poor peasant from the sticks, a traveling preacher with a dozen disciples. He kept the crowds entertained, but He didn't command any troops. He didn't have a palace or servants to wait on Him. And for the moment, He was a prisoner. Jesus looked powerless. Jesus didn't look anything like a king.

It would be laughable to call Jesus a king. He sure didn't look or act like one. In fact, this was all a big joke for the soldiers who were guarding Jesus. They gave him a fake crown and robes and pretended to show Him reverence.

But Jesus was the one true king. Not Pilate. Not the high priest. Not even Caesar. Jesus. He was the king.

So why didn't Jesus look like a king? Why didn't Jesus act like a king? Why didn't Jesus use His power and authority?

Jesus says, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Jesus is a king like no other king who has ever walked the earth.

The people in Jesus' day were looking for an earthly king, someone like King David who would set them free from their enemies and give them peace and prosperity.

And that's the kind of king that you're looking for, too. You'd love for Jesus to take care of all your earthly needs. You'd love for Jesus to give you peace and prosperity. Wouldn't it be great if being a Christian meant that you would be healthy and prosperous without a care in the world? Wouldn't it be great if having Jesus as your king meant nothing but earthly blessings?

Actually, no. You're much better off with Jesus as a heavenly king rather than an earthly one.

Your true needs are not for the stuff of this earth. Earthly kings, whether it's Caesar, Pilate or Obama can provide you with money and security, they can give you a happy, prosperous life in this world.

But this world is not going to be around forever. This world will one day come to an end. Not because of climate change, not because of nuclear war, not because the Mayans or Nostradamus or anyone else has predicted it. This world and everything in it will pass away because of sin.

When Adam and Eve brought sin into this world, they started the clock ticking. This world and everything in it is going to be destroyed. Everything that you work so hard for, everything that you get for Christmas this year or any year, every last bit and piece of this earth is infected with sin and will be destroyed.

You are a sinner, and everything you touch, even the ground you walk upon is now filled with death. There's no way to fix this world. It must be destroyed and recreated.

So it doesn't do you any good to have a king who gets you more earthly stuff. It's all worthless, anyways. Caesar and Pilate are both dead, and all earthly kings will die. All the stuff that everyone stood in line for for hours over the weekend will turn to dust.

What you need is a king who give you gifts that will last, that aren't infected with sin, that will never be destroyed. What you need is a king who can give you heavenly blessings. You need a king not of this world.

And Jesus is exactly this kind of king. Jesus is no earthly king. Jesus is your heavenly king.

He didn't look much like a king back then, and he still doesn't look much like a king today, but what Jesus gives you is better than any other king can give.

When Jesus was conceived and born, Jesus took earthly, sinful, human flesh and blood, and joined it with his own perfect, holy, immortal being. Jesus took the dead, dying, sin-infected stuff of this earth and transformed it, cleansed it, made it holy. Now death could not destroy it.

A few hours after His interrogation by Pilate, Jesus was nailed to a cross to die. The title above His thorn-crowned head said, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." The king looked powerless. He looked like a total failure.

But death was not the end for Him. On the third day He rose from the dead, conquering sin, death, and all the powers of this world. He showed Himself to be a true king, and He put all these enemies under His feet.

This is the blessing that Jesus, your king, promises to give you. Not earthly things, cheap trinkets that rust or spoil or fade, but heavenly blessings that will last forever. Jesus' kingdom is not of this world.

Jesus' kingdom is a coming Kingdom. We catch a glimpse of it on earth each week in the Divine Service, as Jesus our King comes down for His royal audience. Jesus the king speaks to us, listens to us, feeds us and receives our gifts. But the Kingdom will not be here fully or completely until Jesus comes again in all His glory.

Then we will see what kind of king Jesus truly is, crowned not with thorns but with the stars of heaven.

Jesus will come, and all knees will bow to Him. All people will acknowledge Him as their king. Pilate will bow before Him. The chief priests and Jewish leaders will bow before Him. Caesar and all earthly kings will bow before Him. And you, too, will bow and confess Jesus as your king.

When you see Jesus and his scarred body, the holes from the nails and the spear still there for all to see, what will you think? Will you be scared? Afraid of what Jesus will do to you? Afraid that He will be mad at you and punish you for everything that you've done?

Or will you see those scars as the marks of Jesus' love for you, the king who was willing to die for his subjects? Will you greet Jesus with great joy?

When Jesus returns, it will be too late. No more chances to repent and believe. No more opportunities for forgiveness.

So repent today. Believe today. Acknowledge Jesus as your King today. Receive Jesus' full and complete pardon today. Come to the royal banquet today. We don't know when that day will come. No one knows the day or the hour when Jesus will return.

It won't be like his first coming, when He was born as a babe in Bethlehem, but He will come in power and glory to be your King.

You can look forward to that day with joy and expectation because you have been forgiven, the royal blood of Jesus has been shed for you, and you have been welcomed into His kingdom through Holy Baptism, born again as a child of the king.

You are not of this world, either. You are out of place here, just as Jesus was. But you are a child of the king. You now have royal blood in you. You are a prince or a princess in Jesus' kingdom, and you will reign with Him in His heavenly kingdom. His kingdom is your kingdom. When Jesus comes again you will not be His slave, but a member of His family, to reign with Him forever.

Now that's something to look forward to. Come, Lord Jesus, and be our king.