

Christ The King

11-25-2012

John 18: 33-37

33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" 34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" 35 "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?" 36 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." 37 "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."

I almost want to start today's sermon with the congregation singing Auld Lang Syne. Isn't that the song we sing at the end of the year, as we ring out the old year and ring in the new one? I guess then, your question to me should be; Guerry, it's November 25th. Why would you want us to sing Auld Lang Syne, don't we sing that on New Year's Eve? Sometime it is easy to get confused with what "year" (and I have that word year in quotes) but it is easy to get confused with what year we are talking about. Are we talking about a new calendar year, where we count time from January 1st. through December 31st. Or, are we talking about the fiscal year, where we count time from July 1st through June 30th. The State of North Carolina runs on the fiscal year, and having worked for the state some 37 years now, it's real easy for me to get confused. Since we are in church, I guess it would be appropriate for us to be talking about the church year. Oh yes, we have a church year that is different from either the calendar year or the fiscal year. We start a new church year not with a specific date, but with a certain time- period, Advent. Next Sunday is the beginning of the Advent season. The New Year in the church calendar doesn't start in January. Sometime it starts in November and sometime it starts in December. Either way, the first Sunday in the church calendar, starts with the first Sunday of Advent. OK, so what is Advent? Advent is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. We will talk more about Advent starting next week. So when does Advent start?

Advent starts on the fourth Sunday before December 25. So, the church calendar runs from Advent, starting the fourth Sunday before December 25, and runs through what we call Christ the King Sunday, which is the last Sunday before Advent. Therefore, Christ the King Sunday is the last Sunday in the Church calendar year. Today is Christ the King Sunday. So, with that being the case, today being the end of the church year, next Sunday being the first Sunday of the new Year, Should we not sing auld Lang Syne?

With this Sunday being Christ the King Sunday, I think it's only appropriate that we study this particular piece of scripture from the Gospel of John. Listen to verse 33: **Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"** None of us here can even begin to understand what it means to live under a king's rule. It's a lifestyle that none of us can even begin to really, truly comprehend. A king has absolute control over everyone and everything within his realm. So to speak against a king or worse yet, to claim to be the king would be considered heresy, maybe even treason. Depending on the current king, an act such as this could result in someone being thrown into prison, being tortured, being put to death, or possibly all three. Augustus Caesar was emperor of Rome, but Herod Antipas was like the king of this particular region during this time-period. So for Pilate to ask Jesus do you consider yourself to be the king of the Jews, is asking Jesus to sign his own death warrant if He answers Pilate the wrong way. Verse 34: **"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"** Notice, Jesus doesn't give a simple yes or no answer. The religious leaders saw Jesus as a threat to their power over the people. Jesus said and did too many things that exposed their authority, and so the religious leaders were out to get him executed. They knew that one sure way to get him in trouble was to say that he was disloyal to the king, that he was setting himself up as a political ruler, and that he was trying to get the Jews to revolt against Rome. So they told Pilate, "He wants to be king." Pilate had no choice other than to ask the question. Verse 34: **"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"** Jesus knew how and why he had been arrested. He knew why Pilate was asking the questions. Religiously, Jesus had done nothing wrong. Yet, the Pharisees and Sadducees had to find

a way to get rid of Jesus. Their only hope was to use politics. This man is claiming to be their king. You can't let that go on can you? Arrest him and take care of that. You could get into trouble if you let that continue. Pilate knew if word got back to his superiors that someone was claiming to be a king and he didn't stop it, he would be in trouble. Poor Pilate, he's caught between a rock and a hard place. Verse 35: **"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"** Pilate knew Jesus had done nothing wrong. So he ask, what have you done. Once again Jesus doesn't deny or admit anything. Verse 36: **Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."** You can almost feel Jesus' answer; See, I'm not the kind of king you are thinking of; no armies to do battle; I don't have a physical territory, a place for me to reign; **"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."** Truth; an interesting concept... That is where our scripture lesson ends this morning, with the truth.

It may be where our scripture lesson ends, but it's not where our message this morning ends. I told you earlier this morning living under a monarchy is not a lifestyle any of us can really comprehend. So, today I want you to use your imagination. Tell me, what are Kings like. Are they good or bad? Tell me what a King does. How is a King is treated. How does a King treat other people? If you were a King, what are some of the things you would do? How would you do them? A lot of the answers to these questions would depend on what type of king we were talking about; good kings, bad kings, fair kings, selfish kings. I was reading an article written by a Methodist minister serving a church along the coast of England. The little town where he was located was actually the town where the sailing ship The Mayflower had been built. During his stay there, the announcement was made that the Queen of England was scheduled to come to the town in two years. He wrote about how the town's people spent the next two years sprucing up the town, painting the old buildings, tending their gardens, washing windows, etc. They wanted the entire town to be perfect for the Queen. The British have that type of relationship with their monarchy. In England, the Parliament and The British Prime Minister set the laws and perform the governance. The monarchy is merely a figure head, yet they are loved. Throughout history we have studied kings that were the exact opposite.

Jesus was a king, but he said his followers would not fight for him with weapons of war; He actually commanded them not to. A bowl and towel are a symbol of the kind of King Jesus was. Jesus was a king, but he knelt at the feet of his followers and washed their feet. Jesus was a king, but he had no palace, no slaves, no fine horses, and often, no place to sleep at night. Jesus was a king, but he was born in a stable. Jesus was a king, but he died on a cross, a method of execution normally saved for the worst of criminals. Jesus is a king, but not like the kings of this world. As King, Jesus calls people to obey and follow in his path. And we do, not because we have to or else, but because He lives by truth. We follow Him because He lives by love. Truth and love; these things are right. We follow Christ our King because He served us; God sent His only son to save us from ourselves.

Christ the King Sunday is a fairly new celebration for the church, especially protestant churches. We've been celebrating Christmas about 2,000 years; but Christ the King Sunday, at least what we know it as today, only began in 1925. Pope Pius XI was the Pope at that time. He wrote a paper and instituted a new celebration in the Catholic Church. His paper made perfect sense. The paper came at a time when Mussolini was gaining popularity and fascism was gaining ground in Europe. This new celebration was called The Feast of Christ the King and was supposed to affirm, once and for all, that Christ rules all, not Mussolini, not Hitler. Christ is King over all creation. Most mainline protestant churches began celebrating Christ the King Sunday in the 1980's when the Revised Common Lectionary became popular. Christ was King in the 1920's and 1930's, when the pope wrote the paper and started the celebration, not Mussolini, not Hitler. Mussolini and Hitler are gone now. But the challenge doesn't stop with their deaths. In the world today Christ is King, not consumerism or the free market. In the world today, Christ is King, not death and violence. In the world today, Christ is King and we ourselves are members of that kingdom, subject to Christ alone. When Jesus was nailed to the cross and the title "King of the Jews" was hung over his head in what the Jewish leaders and Pilate thought to be a cruel joke, He really was king. What this

means is that Christ is not only King over all creation, He is also King over your life! He not only rules over everything, He rules over your things. The question is, do you serve Him, or do you let other things rule and govern you? You know, you can make all kinds of things king over your life. You can give all kinds of things control over your life. You can let all kinds of things rule your life. You can let your life be controlled by money. You can let your life be controlled by power. You can let other people rule and control your life. You can let your desire for things like the best cars, the best computers, the best houses, or whatever else is the “latest and greatest” according to society control your life. You can let these things control you, but you are not living out the truth that we know as Christians. As Christians, we know that Christ is King! As Christians, we know that all the things of the world will fade away, and only Christ will last. As Christians, we know that Christ is King.

You can let bad things and bad situations rule your life. You can look at bad things going on in the world and let fear rule your life. You can look at trials you may be going through in your life, whether they be health issues, or fear of losing your job, or trying to get the health coverage you and your family need, or getting out of debt, or family problems, or so many other things that may be happening. You can look at those, and let those fears rule your life. You can let the things of this world rule your life or situations rule your life, or you can let Jesus Christ rule your life with truth and love. You can let Christ be King of your life.

Christ wrote no books, composed no songs, drew no pictures, carved no statues, amassed no fortune, commanded no army, and ruled no nation on earth. Yet, He who never wrote a line has been made the hero of countless volumes. He who never wrote a song has put music into the hearts of nameless multitudes. He who refused the kingdoms of this earth has become the Lord of millions. Christ is the King.

So, this morning, the question you have to ask yourself,

Is Christ your King?