

Sermon for November 25, 2012 – Christ the King

John 18:33-37

Theme: A King unlike any other. . .

- 1) *He is patient with his enemies.*
- 2) *His kingship is divine.*
- 3) *He is truth personified.*

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 have quick quiz question regarding our sermon text. Who was interrogating whom in that account? Well, that's simple – Jesus was interrogating Pilate! "But wait, that's not what the text says," you might be thinking, "Pilate – the governor of Judea – is clearly interrogating Jesus as to who he claims to be."

Well, when you look at it on a worldly level, I suppose that is what the human eye sees. But if you look at it through the eyes of faith, you see Pilate standing before the King of heaven and earth being asked what He believes.

Brothers and sisters in Christ – when the world looks at Jesus, it sees a mere man – a historical figure at best – who is just like the rest of us. It scoffs at us for believing that Jesus is the almighty King of heaven and earth. I mean, really – does Jesus look like a king as he stands before Pilate and allows himself to suffer such great injustice? Humanly speaking, no. But that's because **Jesus is a King like no other.** 1) *He is patient with his enemies.* 2) *His kingship is divine,* and 3) *He is truth personified.*

Part One: He is patient with his enemies.

When I think of how earthly kings deal with their enemies, I imagine them as being somewhat arrogant, wrathful and maybe even a little impetuous. But I don't imagine a King patiently and lovingly trying to instruct an enemy who is insulting him. Do you?

And yet this is exactly what our King Jesus was doing with Pilate. Here is the situation: the leaders of the Jews wanted Jesus crucified because He told the truth about himself being the Messiah. The problem was that the Jews were not allowed to legally kill anyone without the consent of the Roman governor. This is why the Jewish leaders charged Jesus with this: "*We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king.*" (Luke 23:2)

Pilate knew that this was a blatant lie. He was not a stupid governor. Jesus' ministry was not conducted in a vacuum. Just a few days earlier (on Palm Sunday) Jesus was hailed by a large crowd as the "King of the Israel" (John 12:13). Trust me, if there was anything the Romans investigated and dealt with swiftly, it was any hint of possible insurrection. We can certainly imagine that Pilate – who is known to have assassinated innocent people for merely hanging around possible insurrectionists – had spies checking Jesus out the minute the crowds started to hail him as king. The fact that Pilate didn't arrest Jesus then shows us that He wasn't all too worried about him.

Still, Pilate had to investigate, so he went back into his palace and *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?"*"

At first glance it might seem as if Jesus is being flippant. No, he is not. He is calling Pilate to consider his ways. As I said before, Pilate probably kept tabs on Jesus. Did Jesus ever give Pilate any reason to consider him an insurrectionist; or was Pilate merely complying with the wishes of the crowd? Jesus was trying to get Pilate to think about his actions because He

knew the great danger Pilate was in. The cowardly injustice that lay deep in Pilate's heart would soon erupt into ordering the crucifixion of God. Jesus is nevertheless patient with him, wanting Pilate to come to repentance and faith. Hence his question *"Is that your own idea – are you, as judge over Judea, truly worried about me rebelling against Rome; or did others talk to you about me – are you merely following the whims of this mob and sinfully not following the course that justice dictates."*

Pilate isn't the only one Jesus is patient with. The inspired pen of St. Peter wrote: *[Jesus] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9) Yes, what a blessing it is that Jesus is not like other kings, whose tempers can easily flare. If Jesus were like other kings, we would all be in hell right now due to the numerous times we rebelled against him.

But God is patient with us, not wanting a single one of us to perish. By means of his Holy Word he calls us to consider the intentions of our heart – much like he did with Pilate. His law leads us to look deep inside of us to see the evil that lurks there – that is ready to crucify Jesus in order to pursue a sinful course. Patiently he leads us to that conclusion – all the while bearing up with our stubborn, arrogant hearts. And when we finally do acknowledge our total depravity? Then he is there to patiently remind us of his love and strengthen us with his forgiveness that we might live a new life of humble obedience to him. Praise God that our Jesus has patience, unlike any other king!

Part Two: His kingship is divine.

Another way Jesus is different than any other King is in regard to his divinity. In the ancient world many kings claimed to be gods. They wanted their people to worship them so as to keep them under their control. The Romans emperors (whom Pilate represented) were not exempt from this false idea. Ancient kings would build statues to themselves, brag about how they were supposedly divine, and force people to worship them.

How different is King Jesus. He did not have his followers build statues of him. He did not go around boasting and bragging. He doesn't force anyone to worship him. He simply let his teaching and miracles speak for themselves. And, unlike other kings, Jesus most certainly is divine.

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."

The fact that there was no rebellion, no one storming the palace to rescue Jesus, shows that He is a different kind of king. It shows that his kingdom is from heaven. God appointed his Son to be king over all because of the salvation he would earn for mankind through his suffering and death on the cross. The Old Testament scriptures are filled with allusions and prophecies about this fact, for example Daniel 7:14, which pictures Jesus before the heavenly throne of God. *He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.*

Jesus' kingdom is not of this world – and what a comfort this is for believers. On this earth, Christians can expect suffering. We see the godless prosper and false teaching spread. Sometimes it seems as if believers are God's enemies because of what they suffer. What a comfort it is to know that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is not seen in how materially successful we are or how little we suffer. God's rule is found in the heart of those whole believe, who hold on to the promise that they are reconciled with God in Christ, and that Jesus will work in all these for their eternal good - to deliver them safely home to his eternal kingdom.

And so, with this knowledge, the Christian is ready to suffer all – knowing that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ and his gracious rule on our behalf. With this knowledge, the Christian can cry out with Luther: *"And do what they will -- Hate, steal, hurt, or kill -- Though all may be gone, Our victory is won; The kingdom's ours forever!"*

Praise God that our Jesus is truly divine, unlike any other king!

Part Three: He is truth personified

It has been said that “diplomacy is telling someone to go to hell and having him look forward to the trip.” In other words diplomacy is chock full of empty promises and half-truths. Kings and world leaders are excellent diplomats!

How different is King Jesus from every other earthly king. How so? He always testifies to the truth. He is, in fact, truth personified.

"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."

What does it mean that Jesus is the truth and testifies to the truth? What truth are we talking about here? It is the truth of who we are, who God is and how are saved.

Jesus, out of love for mankind, does not hold back any punches. He tells us in His Word: “You are completely corrupt. There is not a single intent of your sinful heart that is even remotely pleasing to me. You are a hopelessly miserable, evil person – a sinner who has no hope of saving himself. But fear not, because I have come to save you. I will live the perfect life you failed to live and thereby earn the righteousness that my Father demands of you. I will then take your sins upon myself, go to the cross and suffer and die for them all. This sacrifice will satisfy God’s demand for justice. I will send out my Holy Spirit through the preaching of my Gospel, to call you to repentance and create faith in your hearts. Through faith you will receive as your very own the righteousness and forgiveness I won for you. I will adopt you into my family. You will be my dearly loved children, and I will give you eternal life as your inheritance.”

Jesus also tells us in the Bible: “If, however, you refuse to believe in me, want to attempt to earn your own way into heaven or chose to be a hypocrite – loving sin more than me and trying to use my salvation as a license to sin – then know this: you will have no part of salvation. You are still in your sins. When you die, you will die as my enemy and be cast into hell for all eternity. Therefore I call upon you today to repent, turn from away from your sins. Turn to me for forgiveness, and you will have eternal life.”

To know Jesus is to know God and his love for us. To believe in Jesus is to have him as our glorious king. It is to be under his protection – knowing that he works in all things for our eternal good. It is to have hope in the coming deliverance that he will bring about on the last day. This is the truth, and all who believe in Jesus are on the side of truth. They will have eternal life.

Before Jesus stood Pilate – the Roman’s emperor’s ambassador, questioning Jesus’ claim. Before Pilate stood Jesus – God’s own Son, the almighty King of heaven and earth – probing Pilate’s heart for faith. Our dear Jesus is certainly a king unlike any other. Amen.