

**November 26, 2006**  
**Christ the King Sunday**

*"That's my King!"*

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**JOHN 18:33-37**

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**P**ilate 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."

Imagine for a moment a boxing match featuring a world heavy weight champion. 260 pounds of rippling muscle. 30 straight knockouts. All in the first rounds. In the other corner is a 120-pound weakling who has only been boxing for a couple of weeks. The bets are not on who will win but how many seconds it will take the champ to floor his opponent.

The scene before us is not the boxing ring. It is the Praetorium, the palace of the Roman governor, the place where the government of Rome carried out his justice with an iron fist of power. In one corner is Pontius Pilate governor of Judea forced to handle another sticky situation with the Jews. Behind him is all the might and power of Rome. In the other corner is Jesus, already beaten and bloodied by many blows, bound like a criminal with spit still sticking to his hair and beard. The contrast could not be greater. All bets are on Rome to win another triumph over her enemies.

However, what we see with our eyes does not represent the true situation. Behind the bruised face of Jesus, the disheveled hair, the blood on his tunic is someone who is the mighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the creator of the universe. Pontius Pilate had no idea of the great battle that would take place later that day as Jesus took on the sin of the world, made full payment for all sin, and then cried out with a loud voice, "It is finished."

In his vision in the Revelation John hails Jesus as we see him this morning. He is the mighty God, the Savior who delivers people from Satan's power. "To him who loves us and has freed us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen." When we see Jesus suffering under Pontius Pilate we are not ashamed. We are proud to proclaim to the world "That's my King!" When we see him hanging on the cross, we do not turn away in disgust. No we point our finger in awe and wonder as we risk ridicule to proclaim, "That's my King!"

**For some Jesus is nothing**

Pontius Pilate had no idea who Jesus was when he summoned him to court. You can almost hear the disdain and sarcasm in his voice as he asks the question, "Are you the king of

the Jews?" Pilate thought Jesus was nothing, definitely not worth getting up early in the morning and certainly no threat to power and greatness that was Rome.

Whenever Jesus intersects with the lives of people he challenges them to make some judgment or some decision about who he is. For some Jesus is just a legend concocted and put into a book called the Bible. For others he is a great teacher who gave us words we can use to improve our lives. And others he is nothing but a trouble-maker. Perhaps you have attended college classes where the professor maligns the name of Jesus and proclaims Christianity as the source for most of the wars and hatred in the world today. Or remember the story of the girl who goes into a jewelry store to buy a cross because she thought it was cool to wear a cross. After looking for a while, she asked the clerk if they had a cross with the little man hanging on it. There is so much more to Jesus than just a little man hanging on the cross, a tragic story in a book called the Bible, a nice man who will help you live a better life.

Notice now how Jesus reaches out to Pontius Pilate to help him see that he is much more than what he sees with his eyes. He asks "Is that your idea, or did others talk to you about me?" Jesus wanted Pilate to start examining the evidence and not base his opinions on what other people are saying. In a crime scene, the investigators look at the evidence. They do not rely on others to tell them what really happened. If Pilate only looked at the evidence that was staring him in the face, he would have seen in the eyes of Jesus a love that was pure and a love that was reaching out to him. The thief on the cross saw this love in Jesus. That is why he turned to him and said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!" Mothers brought their little children to Jesus to bless them. He healed the sick and the lame, opened the eyes of the blind, and spoke to large crowds of people who loved to hear his words. The evidence was everywhere that Jesus was much more than just "the king of the Jews."

Have you noticed how people formulate their ideas about Jesus from second hand information? The father who hates the name of Jesus passes the same hatred down to his children, and the children never attend Sunday school, or read the Bible, or even talk to other Christians. People pick up information about Jesus from PBS specials about Christ, or Time magazine or Newsweek, or books on world religions, but never actually examine the evidence themselves. An attorney and newspaper writer by the name of Lee Strobel decided to look into the Bible to study the resurrection of Christ and prove that it was a hoax. As he examined the evidence, he came to believe that Jesus Christ is his Lord and God. He now writes numerous books defending the Christian faith such as "The Case for Christianity."

The Christmas season is right around the corner. For some the whole message of Christ is only love and peace among people. They never get near the manger in Bethlehem and never hear the angel announce, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord." The wonderful words from the strains of Handel's Messiah reaches their ears but never takes hold of their hearts. "For unto you a Child is born, unto you a son is given and his name shall be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Jesus means nothing.

At one time Jesus meant nothing to you. You were born into this world thinking Jesus was nothing. You were without God and without hope as it tells us in Ephesians. You would

never be caught singing hymns, such as "Crown him with many crowns." You were born ashamed of Jesus, and ashamed to say, "That's my King!" But not it has all changed. The Savior who reached out to Pontius has reached out to you. The Shepherd called you, brought you into his arms and made you part of his eternal kingdom.

### **For us Jesus is everything**

Oh, let's look again at how Jesus speaks more words to Pontius Pilate to call him into a kingdom that will last forever. Pilate asks Jesus, "What is it you have done?" Jesus uses this opportunity to do what he always did for three years of his ministry. He talked to people about the kingdom of God that was totally different from any kingdoms on this earth. "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were my servants would fight to prevent my arrest. But now my kingdom is from another place."

The best way to describe to you what Jesus means when he talks about the kingdom of God is to think of the word love. What do you desire more in life than anything else? Is it not to be loved? If you have a home where people love you, or a marriage where someone loves you, you have a deep sense of security and comfort. Everything can be taken away from you, but if you still have love, you are able to say, "Things are OK because I have someone in my life that really, really loves me and cares about me." If you are in such a place where there is love, it can be the most dismal place in the world, and you would still find peace and joy in that love.

What if you could enter into a place, not a physical place, but a place or zone where you are sure that God loves you with a very intense personal love that will never fail you? You can never get enough of this love. It fills every part of your life. What if you were able to say with the Psalmist David, "Goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life?" Think of how special your life

would be. That's why Jesus came to this earth. He came to take you into a kingdom, the kingdom of God. He came to make you God's dear child, help you live under this fantastic, superlative zone of love wherever the steps of life lead you.

Let me tell you more about this King of Love who takes you into this kingdom of love that lasts forever with the comparison of two people falling in love and getting married and totally enjoying their love for each other. A young man is walking down the street. A girl drops her package and he picks it up and hands it to her. She thanks him. They strike up a conversation. They have coffee together. He asks her out on a date. From that moment he begins planning how he might do nice things for her, hoping to win her love and favor. She does the same for him. Eventually they tell each other, "I love you." They start planning a new life together and eventually get married. Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords, came to this earth, goes to a cross, takes the sin of the world on himself, so he can remove that huge obstacle of sin that prevents him, the Holy Spirit and the heavenly Father from loving people. Then he finds people on the street that don't care about him, and he shows them his love, he shows them the nails marks in his hands and side, and says to them, "Peace be to you!" That's what Jesus was doing with Pontius Pilate, reaching out to him and showing a kingdom, a kingdom of love that was different from anything he had experienced in the Roman Empire.

Pilate does not see Jesus for the King of love that he is as he exclaims, "You are a king then!" Again Jesus reaches out to him, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." Jesus came to this world to testify to the greatest truth the world has ever been shown, the truth that God loves people, wants them to spend eternity with him, and was willing to sacrifice his Son to bring people into his kingdom, his sphere, his zone, his world of everlasting kindness and love. God does not want people to perish forever without the blessing of his Son. That is why Jesus spoke to Pontius Pilate the way he did. It thrills us to see how Jesus reached out and showed love to this governor of Rome. We feel like shouting "That's my King!" "That's my King!" See how much he loves people and wants them in his kingdom. See how much he loves you.

*The King of love my shepherd is, Whose goodness fails me never;*

*I nothing lack if I am his, And he is mine forever.*

*Confused and foolish oft I strayed, But yet in love he sought me*

*And on his shoulder gently laid And home, rejoicing, brought me.*