

Christ the King Sunday, November 21, 2021 – Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam

John 18:33-37 -- *³³Pilate 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?" ³⁶Jesus 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."*

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, who rules all things on earth for the good of his family of believers and rules eternally in his heavenly kingdom, dear fellow believers.

In the Gospel of John the trial of Jesus is recorded at the end of chapter 18 and the beginning of chapter 19. I think that it would have interesting to observe Pilate's reaction to a comment of the Jews as this trial came to an end. Pilate asked the assembled crowd "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" Did Pilate break out in laughter? Did he raise his eyebrows? Did he merely think to himself, Aren't they full of it?" You see the Jewish people were anything but loyal, respectful, obedient subjects of the Roman Emperor! They were always causing trouble for the Romans. In fact when Passover time came, Governor Pontius Pilate always came to Jerusalem from his seaside capital in Caesarea. He wanted to be there in person to take charge of the unrest, which often happened when the numerous Jewish pilgrims came for this great festival time.

The Jews rejected Jesus as their king. Pilate's questions and Jesus' responses tell us that we can do just the opposite. This morning, we learn that we can say: **THAT'S MY KING!**

1. He's My King because of the nature of his kingdom -- It's a Spiritual Kingdom

Ever since the time of David and Solomon, the Jews wanted a king. They looked forward to the promised Messiah-King who would give them their best life now. But when Jesus arrived on the scene, all he wanted to talk about were spiritual things—about the next life. He wouldn't miraculously wipe out all disease in this life even though he could. He wouldn't continue to provide bread and meat from the sky even though he could. He wouldn't destroy the Romans with his awesome power even though he could. So they rejected him. With bitter irony, they even sided with the hated Romans to get rid of Jesus, since they couldn't execute anyone by Roman law.

So bringing him before Pilate they accused him of treason: of refusing to pay taxes to Caesar and of claiming to be a king, setting up a kingdom in opposition to Caesar. And though it was painfully obvious that Jesus was innocent of any crime deserving death, it was Pilate's job to defend Caesar and his kingdom, and fearing a Jewish uprising, he put Jesus on trial, rather than dismiss the case.

Again, what irony! The judge of all people, the ruler of the universe, being judged by a cowardly Roman ruler. *Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Are you a king, trying to oppose Caesar?" But Jesus still didn't want to talk politics, but of spiritual matters, so trying to draw a confession from Pilate he answered a question with a question... "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" But Pilate dismissed it. With sarcasm he said, "Am I a Jew?" "This talk of Messiah is a Jewish matter, of no concern to me." And he changed directions. "What is it you have done?" "Why do your own people hate you so much?"*

And Jesus told him, *"My kingdom is not of this world... But now my kingdom is from another place."* Jesus' kingdom was not the earthly one his people expected. He didn't come to establish an

earthly rule. He didn't come to be popular. He didn't come to accumulate wealth. He didn't come to bring glory to himself or his followers here on earth. And he didn't come to make life easy for everyone on his side.

His kingdom, established in heaven from eternity, with his jurisdiction nothing less than all creation, was not and is not of this world. And it wasn't established like any other kingdom either, by succession, election, or conquest. His kingdom was always his before this world began. And when he brought his kingdom to earth, it still wasn't an earthly kingdom.

You see, Jesus kingdom is in people's hearts and minds. The Greek word for "kingdom" used throughout the Old Testament has a verbal idea to it. Perhaps "ruling" would be a better translation. Jesus "kingdom" is his ruling in peoples' hearts. By nature every person seats him or herself on the throne of their own heart. We rule our own mock kingdoms in whatever way we think will best serve ourselves. But in the end our self-rule will end in self-destruction in an eternity of regret in hell. But Jesus knocks people off their thrones in order to save them. And he takes his seat on our hearts. That's My King – the One who rules in my heart!

But how does he do that? What weapons does he use? Jesus doesn't use force, physical or manipulative. Instead, his kingdom has spiritual weapons...

2. He's My King because of the weapons he uses -- They are Spiritual Weapons

Jesus said, *"If [my kingdom] were [of this world], my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."* Jesus kingdom, with its weapons, was no threat to the Romans like most Jews wanted it to be. Not only was there no command from Jesus to fight an earthly battle, but he forbid his disciples to fight. Remember when Peter pulled out his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane? Jesus rebuked him! *"If I wanted to fight, if I wanted force,"* Jesus told him, *"I'd call down legions, thousands, of angels to fight for me, not have you do it, Peter."*

Force is not the way Jesus conquers in his spiritual kingdom. He has no need for swords or guns or armies to bring about his kingdom because his kingdom is not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom in people's hearts and minds. So what weapons does he use? Jesus uses a spiritual weapon that affects hearts and minds—that is, his truth found in the Word. Jesus said, *"In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world..."* not to conquer nations, but, *"to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."*

What is that truth? The Word of God which is *"living and active; sharper than any double-edged sword."* With his law, Jesus penetrates our hearts. In love, he points out who we are without him—lost in our sin and rebellion toward God. He points out that with our sinful self-rule in making ourselves king or queen of our own lives, we've only spelled out our certain ruin forever in hell. And with the powerful Word of God, with that dynamite, he conquers our hearts.

But in his Word, he also reveals how he defeated Satan by resisting every temptation and by living a perfect life for us. In his Word he shows us how he defeated sin and hell by taking our place in hell on the cross to pay for our sin. In his Word he shares how he's removed all of our guilt, made us perfect and clean, and innocent before God by sacrificing himself. In his Word he tells us how he defeated death by rising from the dead on Easter morning.

And no wonder Pilate seemed incredulous at the idea of Jesus being a conquering hero of a king—*"You are a king, then!"* Jesus didn't come like any kind of king he had ever seen or heard of—

conquering his enemies by an apparent defeat, being tortured to death on a cross—and expanding his kingdom not by force or might, but by his Word and by his love.

And by creating faith in our hearts—faith in the truth of the Gospel—the Holy Spirit moves us to want to put Christ the King where he rightly belongs—seated on the throne of our lives. We, who are on the side of truth, crave every opportunity to listen to him in his Word. We long to hear more about his grace to us every chance we get! We, who have been conquered by his love, love him in return and long to live for him and to serve in his kingdom for making us a part of it by his grace.

As we listen to this conversation between Judge Pilate and Jesus the accused, we also conclude that That's My King because we can see the goals our King has.

3. He's My King because of the purpose of his kingdom – He has spiritual goals

Even though Jesus knew that the outcome of his trial and even though he knew the agony of the cross and worse yet, of hell, that he was about to endure, notice what occupied Jesus thoughts. Not a bitter vindictive desire for revenge on Pilate who was about to sign his death warrant, but a loving concern for him—a longing to bring Pilate into his kingdom too! Jesus lovingly pleaded with Pilate to consider who he was, *"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"* That's the loving goal of Jesus—not to bring about world peace or to end world hunger, but to bring about a peace with God and bring more individual souls into his kingdom.

Jesus already had his kingdom in heaven. He ruled all things with his Father. He didn't need to come to earth to establish any kingdom here. He could have just stayed put. But out of pure, undeserved love, he left his throne in heaven to accomplish his goal—to bring us into his kingdom. And the goal of his kingdom is not to remove all suffering here on earth, but it's much bigger, and much longer lasting than that! His goal is to remove sin and by doing that to remove all suffering forever in heaven. And his goal is to bring *every* soul into his kingdom. He didn't come, as Pilate suggested, just for the Jews. Jesus wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4)

So dear friends, make that goal your goal! Have a greater desire to bring others into Jesus' kingdom, than to bring more blessings into your own lives, because all too often you and I, like the Jews of Jesus day, want an earthly king too. We may say material things aren't that important, but we still want them and make them our goal. We still make it our goal to have an easy job, a perfect family, and constant good health. We want everyone to like us and all our problems to go away, and we want Jesus to provide it all. We too often strive for different goals than Jesus.

But Jesus knows that granting those blessings might be counter-productive to his goals, so he doesn't give us our best life *now*. He lets us have problems. He lets us feel the pain. He lets loved ones suffer. But he allows it all so that we can be better witnesses of the greater blessings we have: We have peace with God and protection from our spiritual enemies. We have the certain promise of eternal comfort and joy, because *"...our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 3:20)

Dear friends in Christ, live as members of Jesus' kingdom, with Christ ruling in your hearts. Live in thanksgiving to him for making you a member of his kingdom by the truth of his Word and long to listen to Jesus in his Word more often. Live as members of his kingdom, making your goals his goals, eagerly doing your part to expand his kingdom. And live in peace with eager anticipation for the day we join Christ our King in his heavenly kingdom! **THAT'S MY KING!** Amen.