



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 21, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

Last Sunday of End Time: Christ the King

First Lesson: [Daniel 7:13-14](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 45

Second Lesson: [Revelation 1:4b-8](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 18:33-37](#)

Our King Rules By Truth

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from Him Who Is, Who Was and Who Is to Come:
Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Every year the church year closes on Christ the King Sunday. The king is kind of a nebulous thing for us today. I don't think it has the same meaning for us today as it did at the time of Christ. When I hear king today, the first thing I think about, being a WWE fan, is the king of the ring in World Wrestling Entertainment. Before you tell me that it's all fake, well, so was Avatar. It's all entertainment. Get over it. Kings don't really mean a whole lot to us. There may be a figure head in some European country. Or if they actually are involved in ruling, it's a constitutional monarchy so, like a Prime Minister or President in other places that rule, they have to deal with other people they don't deal with when they just say it and it is. In our world today, kings don't quite have the power they did at the time of Christ.

Look at THE king at the time of Christ; that was Caesar. He was ruler of most of the known world at that time in the Western world. If he said something, it was done. If you messed with Caesar, it usually didn't go really well for you because he had the ultimate power and he was ruling over an incredible kingdom at that point in time. But he isn't ruling anymore. Earthly kingdoms come and go.

As we heard in our First Lesson and as we heard in our Psalm today, the kingdom that our God rules over is an eternal kingdom and it's a kingdom that is unlike any other kingdom. Today as we look at Jesus and John, we can kind of see why because He is a King unlike any other king. He doesn't rule by force. He doesn't rule by might. He rules by the truth of His love. That love we see today for Pilate. And it's a love that is there

for all of us. It's a love that is unlike any other love, which in His plan means that His people love like no one else on the face of the earth. So let's take a look at Jesus and His interaction with Pilate.

It talks about Jesus being summoned. Pilate went back inside the palace. It wasn't really a palace. It was the Praetorium. It was the Garrison where the soldiers were. That would be a good place for Pilate to be during the week of Passover because everyone was coming to town and national fervor was running high. It was often a time when there were problems that he had to deal with because the Jews didn't like the Romans. They wanted to be rid of the Romans and all those things that you know. This was a time when some of the national fervor built up.

The chief priests and the other leaders of the Jews had brought Jesus early to the Praetorium to where Pilate was that morning. This was early Friday morning. The night before, Jesus had been betrayed after He was praying in the Garden. The mob came with Judas. They seized Him. They had the sham trial with the chief priests. They couldn't get their lies coordinated and finally they asked Him flat out, "Are you the Christ? Are you the Son of God?" Then they convicted Him of blasphemy, but they couldn't put Him to death so they had to take Him to Pilate. They couldn't go to Pilate with this religious charge, so they brought Him to Pilate and said that He claims to be the king of the Jews.

If it's a claim about a threat to Caesar, Pilate has to take it seriously because that's his job as the one who was ruling over this area of Caesar's kingdom. So he takes Jesus from the Jewish mob, the soldiers that had brought Him there, and now He is under Roman control. They bring Him in and he asks Him the question, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

In Matthew, Mark and Luke we don't have this discourse that we have here in John. The Holy Spirit uses John to fill in some of the blanks from the three Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke, that kind of write from the same point of view. They go from Pilate asking "Are you the king of the Jews" to about Verse 37 in what we were looking at where it says "It is as you say." That's the answer they go right to. They skip this whole discourse that is there in the middle where Jesus says to him, "Is this your own idea, or did someone else talk to you about me?"

Jesus had just been outside and He heard all the accusations they were bringing against Him. He knew where this accusation came from. So you have to stop and ask yourself, why does the Holy Spirit have John record this for us? Jesus wasn't asking this question for His own benefit. It had to be for Pilate's. He had just heard it all. What He is trying to get Pilate to do is to stop and think about who Jesus is and what actually is going on. We see this in His interchange with Pilate. To me it's an amazing expression of Jesus' love and concern for Pilate.

He is asking all these questions to try to get Pilate to think about who Jesus really is, and they are not designed to get Pilate to change his mind about putting Him to death because He knows that's why He came to earth. He has to die on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. After living a perfect life and being the holiness that God requires of us, He had to then die as the punishment for sins. He wants Pilate to change his mind about who he thinks Jesus is.

Jesus, from the time He had been arrested, unlike many of you in the next 5-10 minutes, He had never slept. He had been paraded here, there, and everywhere. He knows He is about to die. He knows He is about to endure the very wrath of God. God will forsake God. He is going to go through the agony of hell on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. And what is He doing? He is desperately trying to get Pilate to change His mind about who Jesus is. "Did this come from you, yourself, or did the others talk to you about me?" Obviously it was others that had talked to him. Pilate answers with kind of a sneer. "I'm not a Jew, am I? It's your people that handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" I have to think by this time it's pretty obvious to Pilate that Jesus isn't leading a rebellion, and He's not trying to be an earthly king. So Pilate probably has to understand, "You must have done something that really upset these guys because they are so desperate to have you dead." They bring Him to Pilate but they won't come into the courtyard because then they would be defiled with the celebration of the Passover. Killing an innocent man, that's okay, but breaking the manmade laws, that they would not do. So Pilate knows that something is going on.

Jesus gives him another answer that is designed (I think) to get him to think. Take a look at what Jesus says. ***"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."*** If you're Pilate, that answer has to be one of the strangest things you've ever heard! ***"My kingdom is not of this world."*** Jesus is saying that's obvious because if it were, "I'd have soldiers, I'd have servants, and they would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews and we'd have a conflict like any other earthly king would have of military might. But that's not how I operate because ***my kingdom is not of this world.***"

What does that leave? Is this the first episode of Ancient Aliens? ***"My kingdom is not of this world."*** Pilate has to wonder if this guy is nuts! ***"...my kingdom is from another place."*** What's left after this world? You have to think he is thinking maybe this guy is just a little nutty, but as things go on, his wife has the dream later. Later on, the Jews say He has to die because Pilate is trying to get Him released. They say He has to die because He claimed to be God and because of that, He has to die. You have to start wondering; did Pilate think more and more about this?

But here is the thing... Scripture does not tell us whether Pilate believed Jesus or didn't believe Jesus. So I think what the Holy Spirit wants us to focus on is not Pilate, but Jesus. Jesus is talking to the guy that could keep Him from dying and His goal is NOT to get him to keep Him from dying. His goal is to get Pilate to think about Jesus in a whole new way, to understand that His kingdom is not from this world, it's from... divine would be a good answer. That He is what He claimed to be to the Jews (God) and that His kingdom is not of this world because His kingdom is that eternal kingdom that we heard about in our other readings.

His kingdom is a kingdom that is not established by force. It's established by being perfect in our place and then dying as the punishment for our sins. Even as He is about to do that, instead of just saying "Come on, Pilate, let's get this over with. Sentence me to death. I've got things to do," in love He reaches out to Pilate. I find that fascinating. I find it something to easily miss. But I think it's important for us because if we are to be His servants, we don't defend Him by force. We don't defend Him by out-yelling other people or being angry or mad at other people. We extend His kingdom the same way He did—by love and by the next thing He pointed Pilate to.

Pilate said, "**You are a king, then!** You said you have a kingdom, you are a king!" And Jesus says "For this reason I was born and for this reason I came into this world" as two separate things is what He really is saying, not just repeating Himself. His kingdom is from another place. He is again telling him He is not just human, like he can see. He is also divine. "I came into this world to testify to the truth. Everyone who is on the side of the truth listens to my voice." The truth, it's "the" truth, not just generic truth, but the truth. The truth that Jesus is talking about is the truth He had prayed about the night before.

Remember when He prayed in the Garden and all the rest of them were sleeping? Praying for His disciples at that time and all who would become His disciples, He said to the Father, "**Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth** ([John 17:17](#))." Sanctify—set them apart; make them holy; take them out of the unbelievers and make them believers and have them live for Jesus. Do that by the truth.

The truth is that Jesus is the only way to heaven. The truth is that Jesus came, because you and I and everyone else in this world are sinners who cannot offer to God anything to make up for even one of our sins! We are no closer to God on our own than Pilate was, but God has desperately reached out to us with the truth; the truth of the Gospel. For many of us it came at our baptism when we were young. For some of us it came as we were older and heard this incredible message that we have a God that loves us so much that He left heaven to be perfect, because that's what He demands of us. Then to die the punishment that our sins should have endured so that we might be forgiven. This is the truth. "If you are on the side of the truth," Jesus says, "you listen to my voice."

You listen to Jesus' voice when you spend time in the Word. You listen to Jesus' voice when you hear people proclaim it in worship, not just the pastor, but the people around you proclaiming that truth as we worship our God. You all proclaimed to each other that you believe you are sinners that should not go to heaven earlier in this service. You proclaimed to one another that you trust that the only answer is Jesus Christ. This is the truth that we need to hear again and again and again and not just take for granted.

So here is our King unlike any other. He establishes His kingdom, not by making His enemy die, but by dying at the hand of His enemy. That's a King unlike any other. He extends His kingdom, not by the might of armies but by the halting, nervous, stomach-churning confessions of those who believe in Him as people like you share the Gospel with one another to build up those who are believers and reach out to others who don't yet know Jesus or believe in Jesus. This is how our King establishes His kingdom.

Here's the amazing thing about our King. When His subjects (that's us) don't do the things He asks of us, He doesn't put us in chains and throw us in a dungeon (like we deserve). Think of how often we view our relationship to God as, *now I believe in God and I know I'm forgiven so now I'm a part of a congregation. That means I should be served by other people. They should meet my needs. Things should go the way I want.* We kind of view membership in a congregation at times like it is membership in a country club, like it comes with privileges. We're in a kingdom unlike any other. It isn't a country club! It means that we have responsibilities. This kingdom extends and grows only when you and I share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that's what the Spirit has told us He is going to work through.

So often we have said to God, "That's not my business. That's someone else's business." But God doesn't throw us in chains and put us in a dungeon. He says to us, "I love you. I have clothed you in the righteousness I have at your baptism. I love you. I give you my very body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. I forgive you for all the times you have put yourself ahead of the task I have given you in my kingdom." That's a King unlike any other.

When we come to that realization, when we see that even those of us who love Jesus still fail Him so miserably at times and yet He continues to love us, that's what causes us to grow and want to do the things He has asked of us; not have to do them but want to do them. I want to know my God better. I want to be with my brothers and sisters in Christ and worship with them so that I can encourage them and they can encourage me. I want to share Jesus with people that don't yet know Him, because if they don't hear about Jesus, they aren't going to be in heaven with me. It's as simple as that. This is the kingdom we live in. This is the King we serve. This is the King who loves us in spite of our failings. And that moves us to want to serve Him even better tomorrow than we did today. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ([Philippians 4:7](#).) Amen.