

King of Glory Lutheran Church
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Year B: Christ the King: John 18:33-37
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John 18:33-37

³³Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” ³⁵Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” ³⁷Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

Revelation 1:4b-8

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. ⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

A little over two years ago when I was called to serve at King of Glory there were three people on staff all named Kathy. What are the odds of that? I can't tell you how many times I found myself in a conversation about "Kathy" when at some point I realized that I was not talking about the same Kathy as the other person.

Have you ever had a conversation with someone and realized a little late that you and the other person were talking about completely different things?

This can easily happen when someone or something has the same name as someone or something else. This is true about people named Kathy. And it's also true about kings.

Today in our gospel reading from John we hear a conversation between Jesus and Pilate. Not a conversation exactly. Jesus is on trial and Pilate is interrogating him.

As Pilate and Jesus go back and forth, Pilate definitely thinks that they are talking about kingdoms and kings that he is familiar with. Kingdoms based on land and armies and wealth. And kings who rule by controlling land and armies and wealth.

So Pilate thinks that he and Jesus are talking about the kingdoms and kings he knows. But of course they aren't talking about the same things. Jesus is talking about an entirely different kind of kingdom and king.

Listen again to Jesus' words from this time from The Message:

³⁶ "My kingdom," said Jesus, "doesn't consist of what you see around you. If it did, my followers would fight so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But I'm not that kind of king, not the world's kind of king."

Jesus' kingdom was not a kingdom that Pilate recognized or understood. The kingdoms Pilate knew were created and maintained by violence and war, by fear and intimidation, by wealth and possessions.

But Jesus says that his followers will not fight or maintain power by the ways that Pilate knows. Jesus' ways are not the ways of earthly kings and kingdoms.

The conversation continues:

³⁷ Then Pilate said, "So, are you a king or not?"

Jesus answered, "You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice."

³⁸⁻³⁹ Pilate said, "What is truth?"

Today truth is standing right in front of Pilate. In the gospel of John 14 Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

But Pilate doesn't understand who Jesus is or what his kingdom is because he only understands kings and kingdoms on his own terms. He wants to keep the power he has and is only concerned with threats to that power.

Pilate does not understand that Jesus is a king like know other. Jesus himself is truth and life and love. Truth far greater than Pilate can comprehend. Truth that is not limited to words or boundaries on a map or anything that can be owned or possessed.

Now you and I can be just as focused on kings and kingdoms as Pilate was. We call them by different names of course. But we too get caught up in things we want, and people we want to control, and power we hope to attain and hold on to.

I wonder today if we recognize the kingdoms we are a part of that don't recognize Jesus as king or as truth and life and love? Kingdoms that are ruled instead by greed, violence, fear and injustice.

If we take a hard look at the kings and kingdoms in our world today it doesn't take much to see that we are a part of systems that hurt people and take advantage of some people for the benefit of others. There are leaders and systems that tell us that violence is strength and that compassion is weak. We receive constant messages that we don't have enough and that we should get all we can no matter what it takes.

Jesus opens our eyes today to the kingdoms we live in and Jesus' kingdom that we are called into.

Today Jesus asks us to listen and look for his kingdom. To know that we are called to be a part of his kingdom where he is king, where he is truth, where he is life. It is a very different kingdom and he is a very different king.

If you were to have a conversation with Jesus about kingdoms and kings, or to put it in our terms, about our life, or our work, or our relationships, would we be talking about the same things?

When we call Jesus our king and know that we are a part of his kingdom I wonder how Jesus will transform our life by his ways and his truth?

Jesus' kingdom is about people not rulers. It is about service not about being served. It is about generosity, not about accumulating things. It is about compassion, kindness, justice, forgiveness and love.

On this Christ the King Day Jesus invites us to see the difference between his kingdom and the other kingdoms we know. He is doing a new thing. He is inviting

us into a new kingdom. A kingdom defined by love. A kingdom where truth is not a fact found in a book but in Jesus who loves us, knows us and calls us by name.

Today Jesus calls us into a new time and a new kingdom. He will teach us the ways of his kingdom and he will be our king.

I'm going to conclude today with the words from one of my favorite songs called "Canticle of the Turning" based on Mary's song the Magnificat which we will hear as we prepare for Christmas during Advent. This song is about God turning and transforming this world.

Canticle of the Turning

1 My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?

Refrain

My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

2 Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn. *Refrain*

You and I, we are called to be a part of Jesus turning and transforming this world. We are called into his new kingdom. So may our souls shout, may our hearts sing and may we always follow and serve Christ our king. Amen.