

## You Are Not A King!

**Revelation 1:4-8 and John 18:33-37 | Christ the King Sunday | November 24, 2024 | Pastor John Klawiter , preaching**

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

Like a holiday that you're convinced was created by Hallmark greeting cards, **Christ the King Sunday** (Jesus on thrones) was the Christian holiday nobody knew we needed.

The origin comes from the pope in 1925—as a not so subtle jab at us Lutherans, and as a direct counter to secular ultra-nationalism.

What does that mean? Let's start with the “when”:

Pope Pius the 11<sup>th</sup> instituted Christ the King Sunday on the last Sunday of October.

That day has meaning to us, especially Lutherans. It's Reformation Sunday for Protestants—the day we remember Luther speaking out against the corruption of the Catholic Church. Pope Pius wasn't celebrating THAT. Whether it was intentional or not, the pope chose this week to be set apart.

Eventually, the date was moved to the last Sunday before Advent.

What else was going on in 1925? The first World War was over. The roaring 20's took over. National pride was swelling around the world. Atheism and secularism were growing in the West—destructive threats to the church. The Pope wanted to flex—show an image of the church that wouldn't back down.

He made a rather ironic choice. Christ, the King, is not a label of strength when given to him in the Bible. It's a term of ridicule.

Just look at the scene play out in John's gospel story today and it's pretty clear that being the “king” is not exactly a title of power and control.

Upon getting arrested in the garden, the leaders of the temple take him from Caiaphas, the High Priests office, directly to Pilate (**SLIDE of Jesus before Pilate**).

## Sermon Transcript

Pilate really wants nothing to do with this. Pilate doesn't know why he's dealing with this guy, just that Jesus is being called a king. It's blasphemy, punishable by death.

Why is this such a big deal?

Kings held onto power tightly. Anyone claiming kingship was a threat. Think of Saul's paranoia about David in the Old Testament. Or King Herod, the ruthless tyrant when Jesus is born.

How did that work out?

Mysterious visitors from a distant land show up to see King Herod. They've come to visit the new king in waiting (**WISE MEN/HEROD**).

King Herod hasn't had a baby. There's no "newborn" king to be found. King Herod is smart enough to play dumb.

Apparently not smart enough to send soldiers to follow this caravan to Bethlehem.

When the magi, or wise men, don't return to tell him where the child is, King Herod goes to the extreme. He orders the death of all future competition—and Jesus' family quickly escapes to Egypt as refugees (**FLIGHT to Egypt**), not returning until King Herod dies.

Threats to thrones lead to devastating power plays. It was expected. The people turned to the king for safety and security.

When Herod dies, his power is split among his children—and Herod Antipas is the one in charge—the one who reports back to the Emperor. This Herod doesn't want anything threatening the safety and security he's got. He's got a good thing going here. It's why his wife tricks him into killing John the Baptist—his message doesn't promote their lifestyle.

Herod's people don't want challenges to his power either. Jesus, speaking about a kingdom not from this world and adored by the crowds from the countryside, can only be dealt with in one way.

He's a challenger to their authority and if we tell Pilate that he's a king, Pilate will have no choice but to kill him.

The plan goes smoothly. Until Pilate actually meets Jesus (**JESUS ON TRIAL**).

## Sermon Transcript

Pilate is looking at this guy and something doesn't add up. Pilate doesn't see him as a king.

Jesus doesn't look like a king. Jesus doesn't act like a king. He doesn't act entitled like a king.

Jesus has just been hanging out with his friends. Before going to the garden to pray, Jesus got on the floor and washed his disciples' feet. I can promise you a king has never done that before. I'm sure Jesus, doing this dirty work, doesn't SMELL like a king.

When Jesus is in the garden and he's about to be arrested, his loyalist Peter takes out a sword and cuts off the guard's ear.

Jesus not only tells him not to fight, but he also actually heals the ear of his captor.

Kings don't do that. They don't care about their enemy, they certainly don't HEAL them.

Don't you think Pilate, upon looking at Jesus has already made up his mind?

Why are these guys wasting my time? This isn't a threat to the empire. Where is his war horse? Where is his army? Where is his crown???

So, the Soldiers get in on the joke.

They put a purple robe on him. They twist a crown of thorns and impale it on his head. They write an inscription "King of the Jews"—for they must be enjoying that this "King" is finding out what happens when you don't back up your claims.

You die.

But that's not how the story ends. Christ's death isn't the end. It's the beginning.

Our King rose from the dead. He came back to save us. He fulfilled his earthly purpose so that we could have eternal life. Because he loves us.

What a king move. Checkmate, Pilate.

Christ the King led his kingdom in a different way. Jesus wasn't seeking glory or to amass wealth through loyal subjects.

He showed us that following him is literally the most counter-cultural thing we can do. That we seek the vulnerable and needy—not to conquer them, but to care for them.

## Sermon Transcript

Christ, humbly, has been there before. My challenge to you is simple. Seek the truth.

***“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.” ~Jesus***

What is truth?

There's a false idol often placed upon Christianity. A belief that claiming our place as a believer entitles us to superiority over others or that we've earned the right to think we're better or should have more, often at the expense of others we deem lesser than ourselves.

It's not true. I get tempted by it all the time. When I'm at book club or Bible Study, we often drift into this temptation—especially when comparing churches. Christianity isn't a competition about who is the greatest.

Christ is not that king. (WITH **MONEY**). Christ is found in places like this (**MANGER**). In the humility of an animal feeding trough. Be this church. Follow this king.

your kingdom come... your will be done... on earth as in heaven.

We give gifts to our unsheltered neighbors. Food for the local students. Items for our youth to buy gifts for loved ones. Money to support Global Hunger.

Fellow servants of Christ, we use our hands, feet, and voices so that God's will be done. Right here. The work of the Kingdom is plentiful. Help is wanted. Amen.