

³³ Pilate 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?”

³⁶ 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.”

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 our Savior, Christ the King, Dear Friends,

Throughout the history of the world, it has always meant a great deal to be the leader of a nation. Emperors, presidents, queens and kings have always expected and received great honor, praise, and obedience. In many cases, rulers have been deserving of such things. In some cases they have not been. Often enough honor, praise and obedience from the people they ruled over was demanded, whether it was earned or not!

Pontius Pilate was the Roman ruler in place in Palestine at the end of Jesus’ ministry and life. These words from John’s gospel today recount the events just before Pontius Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified. There were leaders and kings before him and after him. There will be earthly rulers until the end of the world. But there is only ONE King over all! The very words of Christ our Savior reveal that:

JESUS IS KING!

- 1. IT WAS SHOWN BY HIS LIFE (37b)**
- 2. IT WAS EVIDENCED BY HIS WORDS (36, 37a,c)**
- 3. IT WILL BE REVEALED IN HIS JUDGMENT (34,35,37c)**

You know, Christmas is just around the corner. I know, I know, it’s not even Thanksgiving yet, and already websites and newspapers are full of Christmas ads, displays are up in stores, and I’m sure you don’t want to hear that there are only 35 shopping days left before Christmas. But I mention Christmas for a more noble reason than commercialization this morning. Today is the last Sunday in the Christian Church Year; it is called Christ the King Sunday. I hope that the connection between Christmas and Christ the King is obvious. The entire reason we will celebrate in 5 weeks is that we want to remember why it was that Jesus came. In a world that is often confused about who Jesus was and is and why he walked this earth, there need be no confusion. Listen to the answer Jesus gives when Pilate confronts him, ***You are a king then!—“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.”*** Jesus Christ was and IS KING! He SHOWED IT BY HIS LIFE. The simple fact that Jesus was born into the world is clearly stated. And what did that life mean? It meant that Jesus was true man and true God. He was true God, but was willing to be born as a human being. “Why?” we might ask, “What would that prove?” Some of you would remember the old TV show *Mission Impossible*. Many more of you would think of the five *Mission Impossible* movies starring Tom Cruise. And if they can figure out how much to pay Mr. Cruise, they can get back into production for the 6th movie! *Mission Impossible* starts with a message that begins, “Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is...”

When we think about the way life in this sinful world is, it may seem that Jesus was sent on a seemingly impossible mission by his heavenly Father. The mission was to live life as a human being, but never do anything wrong—never sin, keep God’s law perfectly. Then go through suffering, which included the trial and sentencing, mentioned earlier. Death on a cross—like a notorious criminal—would follow. Then he was to rise from death and ascend back into heaven.

If you simply think about how easy it is to retaliate in a bad way to mistreatment at the hands of other people, that kind of sounds like an impossible mission! But not for JESUS THE KING! He was not the kind of king we might encounter in the world, the kind that only expects to be served. JESUS THE KING served us with HIS LIFE. He chose to accept that mission from his Father. It was his great love for you...and all these people sitting around you...and all people of the world throughout time. He loved us all so much that he did not want us to suffer in hell for eternity because our sins before the holy God—which is what we were destined for. Only the Son of God, the KING, could accomplish this mission.

JESUS SHOWED THAT HE WAS KING BY HIS LIFE. He did what was necessary to pay for our sins and give to us eternal life. JESUS OUR KING is also our Savior. HE SHOWED IT BY HIS LIFE of love given for sinners.

Listen to a couple of things the Bible tells us which help us to understand what HIS LIFE and death mean for us: **The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).** And this: **We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7).** By faith in Jesus, when God looks at us he sees his Son, his perfect, holy Son. And so we become his children and heirs of eternal life. Heaven is a sure thing for us because of the service of JESUS THE KING. Through the message of the Bible and by the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we have seen HIS LIFE and we know that HE IS THE KING.

The fact that JESUS IS KING is EVIDENCED BY HIS WORDS as well.

Unbelieving historians search for what Jesus' message to the world was. Many theories are proposed about the kind of person he was. They say he was a confused man, or one who was misunderstood, a trouble maker, that he never claimed to be a Savior. Many don't see him as a King over all and ruler of their hearts, but as a teacher, a prophet. If that was so, what was the message? Well, a common thought is that Jesus' message to the world was peace, love, and helping those less fortunate.

I suppose you could believe that it was limited to those things...OR you could believe that the Bible is actually God's Word, like he says it is and that it is true. If that is what you believe, then it means that Jesus' message to the world included love, peace, and helping those less fortunate, but it also included a preaching of sin, right and wrong, repentance and confession, reliance on him as the only Savior, encouragement to live by the Scriptures, and holding onto the sure hope of heaven! The vision of Christ in Revelation is that of Jesus with a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth, picturing the law and the gospel being preached and so all those things I just mentioned were part of his consistent message while he was in this world and even now through his words proclaimed by the Bible. You can tell that JESUS IS KING because it is EVIDENCED BY HIS WORDS.

Jesus told the earthly king, Pilate: ***'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.'*** Did Jesus ever claim to be a king? You bet he did! In answer to Pilate's question, Jesus speaks of his 'kingdom' and his 'servants.' This 'kingdom' of his, however, is 'not of this world'. The Kingdom of Christ our King is heaven itself. It is where he *descended from* to become the Savior, it is where he *ascended to* after his resurrection to reclaim his rightful place at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. Jesus' servants have their eyes focused on heaven, not on the things of this world.

So after Jesus said that about his kingdom, Pilate said, ***"You are a king, then!"*** And what was Jesus' response? ***You are right in saying I am a king.*** Did Jesus ever claim to be a king? Without question! These are Jesus' own words! JESUS IS KING as EVIDENCED BY HIS WORDS. No matter what some may say, or how we may sometimes question or doubt, Jesus clearly claimed to be both Savior and King.

In faith, we trust Jesus' words to us to be true and reliable. They have not let us down. When we sorrow over our sins, when we wonder whether Jesus is really there or not, when we don't behave and talk and think like we have a Righteous King over our lives, when we allow others to trample our Lord and King's name, reputation, and Word—when we do all those things, we sin against the very truths opened before us today in the Gospel of John and we reject our Savior-King. Christians ought to be unhappy about the riots and rebellion taking place in our nation's cities post-election day, but the truth is, we have been riotous and rebellious in our hearts against Christ the King! That's what sin is and just like open defiance of our land's laws leads to punishment, so does our sinful defiance of the true King of heaven and earth. Except the punishment is severe and never-ending—eternal death in hell. Our consciences admit that we have been rebellious in a number of ways and our guilt confirms that this punishment would be just.

But then the King's word of forgiveness and pardon comes to us! Jesus' words, *'Father, forgive them.'* ring in our ears like welcome church bells, waking us from despair and inspiring a joy and calm. Our hearts are healed; our minds at peace. We're filled with a desire to live as our King's faithful servants once again. Those words of *forgiveness* are JESUS' WORDS too. They, too, are EVIDENCE that JESUS IS KING.

Matthew, in his gospel, wrote this: ***When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him (25:31,32).*** Paul, in his letter to the Philippians says, ***Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (2:11).***

It's possible to reject, ignore, or despise Jesus as a person lives on this earth, but it is obviously not possible to do these things once Judgment Day arrives. That sobering scene, painted by God in Scripture, of JESUS THE KING sitting on his throne judging every person from every land and every time, will happen. Then every unbeliever will come to know what Christians know already—that JESUS IS KING. It will be REVEALED IN HIS JUDGMENT.

Pontius Pilate summoned Jesus to his official residence for questioning and asked him, ***Are you the king of the Jews?*** Jesus' answer to him may strike us as a bit cocky or smart-aleck: ***Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?*** But this is really an invitation from Jesus. The words might better be translated, ***Are you saying this from yourself?*** As ruler of Palestine, Pilate was to know what was going on there. He knew something about Jesus, to be sure. He must have known at least that he was a healer and a preacher. What Jesus asks is: ***Is that what you think of me...that I am the king of the Jews?***

You may remember Jesus extending similar invitations before. He asked his disciples, ***Who do people say the Son of Man is?*** and ***Who do you say I am?(Matthew 16:13,15)*** He asked Martha, ***Do you believe...that I am the resurrection and the life? (John 11:25,26)*** What Jesus did was to give Pontius Pilate the opportunity to make a confession of faith in him as King and Savior.

Sadly, Pilate rejected the opportunity. Actually he scoffed at the thought of believing such a thing about the man who would, very shortly, be flogged by soldiers at his command. He rejected Jesus because he was a "Jew" first, but then also as any kind of a Savior or King.

The person who does not believe in this lifetime—who does not view Jesus as the King and Savior—will, in death, be bound to the consequences of that view and testimony on Judgment Day. It's like taking a test at school, handing in your paper, and watching the teacher immediately take the red pen out and start marking up your test. It's too late. It's already done. The thought of that is dreadful. For you and me, however, the thought of Judgment Day brings great joy because we know that when that day comes, we will see that what we believed to be true, is true: JESUS IS KING. Our loving Savior will open the gates to heaven and usher us into eternal glory. We will rest from our struggle with sin and sorrow and separation from God. We will no longer have to fight off feelings of riotousness and rebellion against our King. And we WILL receive the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls, made possible by Christ the King.

Judgment Day will happen, and when it does, the fact that JESUS IS KING will be REVEALED IN HIS JUDGMENT.

The world doesn't understand it—but you do! Don't forget it! Don't doubt it! The everyday struggle to serve our King is worth it! Cling to Jesus as your Savior from sin AND as your King! His WORD and LIFE have shown you your KING and on the day of JUDGMENT you will see your KING face-to-face. Until that day, be faithful subjects of Christ the King and serve him only. Amen.

Now the peace of God which transcends all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.