



BELONGING TO THE TRUTH

November 25, 2018, Christ the King Sunday

John 18: 33-37

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To claim that Jesus is King can be dangerous.

“An Anglican priest from South Africa once shared a story about what it was like to believe Jesus was King during the days of apartheid. He said that his entire congregation was arrested for refusing to obey the government. All 240 members of his congregation were arrested and put in jail — from babies to a 90-year-old man. He said, “At least babies and mothers were kept together.” The pastor himself was imprisoned for a year.”

So I say to you again, to claim that Jesus is King can be dangerous.

Jesus Christ is the epitome of dichotomy. He was an innocent, vulnerable baby and yet He is Christ the King and Lord of Lords. It is so hard to think of Him in regards to all that He was, and is, and will be.

He was there in the beginning with the Spirit. He moved over the watery chaos and brought order to life. One of the names He was given is the Word. So often we think of Scripture as being the Word of God, but Jesus Christ Himself was the living, breathing Word of God. John said, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He, [Jesus Christ], was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”*



Jesus, our Lord, was a simple but miraculous baby boy born in a barn filled with hay and animals. He was born amidst sweat, dung and the rawness of the earth. And yet, this little baby boy's birth was so important that wise men from a far-off land showed up to offer their gifts knowing that there, lying in that manger, in harshness, bleakness and simplicity, lay the King of the World. A child born so far away from his hometown, a child born of a carpenter and of a young virgin but with angels showing up and surrounding them. This meek little family and child, a child so important that angels came down from heaven and shared the news with the scattered shepherds throughout the land.

Jesus Christ, always a contrast and always a contradiction. He redefined what truth is, what life is, what it means to be king and what it means to serve as king. He redefined what it means to be human, as God had intended us to be.

Jesus Christ turned the whole world on its head. He taught in ways that contradicted the religious leaders of the time. Rather than creating new laws, he erased old laws. Rather than helping the rich get richer, he told them to give all their money away and to follow him. Rather than pushing aside the sick, the sinner, the lame, the poor, the orphan and the widow, he brought them in under his wing. He healed them and told the world to do the same.

Jesus Christ, our servant King. Man and yet God. The conqueror who, rather than riding into town triumphantly on a steed, chose to humble himself and ride in on a donkey. The mighty warrior who did not conquer territories, but who conquered death itself. This person, this Word who became flesh, who could have called on armies of angels and archangels to do his bidding at any time, knelt at the feet of his disciples, took off his towel and washed their feet with it. This is the truth my dear friends. This is who our God was, is, and always will be.

This radical and amazing God of ours showed us how to live in the world but not of the world. And that's exactly how he told us to live. So recall all the stories you've been taught over your lifetime and use them to see the world through new



eyes, through a new lens. Change the way you live and teach others to change the way they live.

In a world that drives us to always be first, take a seat in the second chair. Put someone ahead of you, before you, in front of you, put someone who has not had a chance to be first, first.

When I was serving at Nassau Presbyterian Church, in Princeton, New Jersey, I experienced an amazing worship service led by one of the seniors in high school there. I cannot recall the text that the young lady preached from, I've got a guess and I'm sure you will catch on, but I will never forget the message that she preached that day.

That young lady preached boldly, telling her friends and the congregation to stop being first and to start being second. To stop being lead fiddle and to start playing second fiddle, to play second chair. Those words landed and they hit me hard and they hit everyone in that room hard. It was a room filled with firsts, firsts among firsts. It was filled with professors at Princeton University, straight-A college students, and high school students and athletes who would go on to receive full rides to whatever college they wanted.

But what really solidified, cauterized and sewed Christ's message into our hearts that day was her setup and her delivery. Prior to the service, everyone entered the room during the prelude while two violinists played. It was so lovely that everyone remained silent and listened as they entered the sanctuary and took their seats. When the song was over, worship began and progressed normally, that is, until her sermon.

When this young lady preached, she told everyone to stop striving so hard to be first and to start looking out for the people who have always been second. She reminded her peers and the adults in that sanctuary that they were all a bunch of first-place people, who needed to look out for the second-place people, and to lift them up, to support them and to give them a chance at being first. She told



everyone not to just step aside but rather to step aside and to truly help the second-place people be first for once.

Then she shared an illustration. She explained that when several violinists play a piece, the best violinist of the group sits in the first seat and therefore is often called the “first chair”. She said many pieces are set up with lead parts to be played by the first chair, while supporting pieces and roles are played by the second, third and fourth chairs.

The young woman then said, “Recall the song you all heard while you walked into the sanctuary today. Close your eyes and remember how beautiful it was.” Then she said, “Now we are going to have the girls play the same song for you again. However, this time we will flip the roles and we will have the part that is for the second chair – the supporting player – be played first, and after she has played that for a time, what had been the lead player will begin to play too. Therefore, the supporting part will become the lead part, and the lead part will begin later and will be the supporting part. Listen to the song again.”

And they played it again, but it was so different from the original song. Eyes in the congregation began to water and everyone was so moved by the piece, this new piece where second was first. And she concluded by saying, “and so the first shall be last and the last shall be first, go now and do likewise.”

God is telling us through Scripture that the ways we are living and ruling this earth are not living up to the standards of what it means to have Christ dwelling in our hearts, God on our minds, and the Spirit coursing through our veins. Take time to listen to your soul, because God is in there trying to tell you something. But if we keep competing to be first, we have no idea who second is. Christ taught us to take care of those who are not only second, but those who are last. And He taught us the least of these will be first in his kingdom. He taught us to make this kingdom, this life, this world, a foretaste of the one to come.



Christ is our King and He taught us to lead the world like a servant and like a shepherd. So let's be His true followers, be His disciples who follow the truth He taught us to believe in, and help Him turn this world on its head by living differently than the rest of the world.

Always the challenger, turning the world on its head. The king of a kingdom that is not from this world but from the one to come. Our king, the king. The one who died for us and taught us to have peace in our hearts and to bring peace into this world. Let us honor Him in all that we say and do.

There is groaning and moaning happening in and around this world. The earth itself is groaning under the pressures put on it by humanity. Listen to the voices of the downtrodden, the weak, the sinner, the orphan. Listen to the voice of our planet as it cries for help. And then do something about it. Don't always push for first; rather take a minute to listen. What is God saying to you? How is God crying out to you from strangers and from icecaps?

Little baby Jesus, cooing in a manger. Growing to be a boy of twelve who sat in the temple teaching the adults and stunning the religious leaders of the time. A young man, born of a carpenter, healing the sick and giving sight to the blind. A king, The King, who hung on a cross designed for dissenters. A king who could have said "stop" at any time, but who loves you and loves me so much so that He was willing to be spat on, kicked, mocked, tortured and even killed for us. Jesus Christ, Son of Man and Son of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

This was the king who fed 5,000 and then 4,000 more. This king whose "reign as king is revealed in humility, self-emptying and service to others. According to the world's standards, Jesus is a very strange king, one who serves, heals, and uplifts His followers."

He walked on water and with not even a word he calmed the storms and the seas. This little baby boy, conquered death and brought truth and life to all.



Jesus Christ, swaddled in a manger but always the instigator, antagonist and antagonist, the rabble-rouser, the defiant one saying that how we live is not how we ought to. That how we rule is not how we ought to rule.

Like I said at the start, to belong to the truth, and to say that Jesus Christ is King, can be dangerous.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.