

## 11/25/2018 Christ the King Sunday—The Last Sunday of End Times

Sermon Text: John 18:33-37

Sermon Theme: There's never been a king who is so humble, honest, and loving.

<sup>33</sup> Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

<sup>34</sup> "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

<sup>35</sup> "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?"

<sup>36</sup> 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."

<sup>37</sup> "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."

What do you think of when you think of a king? Maybe the medieval times with knights and lords and ladies? Maybe a fairy-tale king with a big castle and shining armor? Maybe some world ruler or politician of a kingdom or a country today?

The problem with kings is that they are so human. They may start out with the noblest of ideas to work for the people and to do everything they can to help the people, but soon the power goes to their heads and they start making decisions that are good for them and their kingdom. Soon, they are making decisions that are just good for them.

We see this same story play out time and again throughout the pages of Scripture and throughout the pages of history. The best Biblical kings like David and Solomon were so human, they had their sins that were driven by their power. The best kings and rulers in secular history, had their sins they could not cover up.

As we look at our Sermon Text for this morning, we see a conversation between Pontius Pilate and Jesus. Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea. Important people, people with power, were his friends and co-workers. He was used to dealing with sneaky, underhanded politicians, rulers and even kings whose pride and ego drove them into many sins.

He has heard the charges about Jesus and he begins to deal with him in a way that he might deal with these other sneaky people. He begins to ask Jesus questions to see if Jesus will tell lies or if he will hang himself with the truth. What Pilate finds is that he has never met a king like Jesus: a humble king, an honest king, a loving king.

We see it all the time, an important person, a star, athlete, or politician gets pulled over and what's the first thing they say to the police officer? Do you know who I am? These words are not meant to help the officer write out the ticket or check the ID, these words are said with pride and ego, "Do you know who I am? Do you know who you pulled over and inconvenienced? I am so important you should let me go."

It's interesting to look at Jesus ministry and see how often he did NOT tell people that he was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This text is one of the few places where Jesus actually uses the word King to describe himself. There are other times where the word king is used along with Jesus, but Jesus is not the one who uses it. When the Wise Men are meeting with King Herod they ask where they might find the King of the Jews to worship him. When Jesus calls the disciple Nathaniel, Nathaniel replies in awe, "You are the King of the Jews." On Palm Sunday, the people chanted, "Hosanna, Blessed is the king of the Jews." Finally, there are a few occasions where Jesus is preaching and teaching and he refers to a king who will come to judge on the last day. But it is only here, with this unbelieving governor of Judea, that he admits that he is King of Kings.

Pilate was probably ready for a lot of things with this criminal who was supposed to be a king. Pilate would have been prepared for bluster and threats, an earthly show of power, a bribe, a promise of gratitude if leniency was shown, but definitely not humility. Yet, humility is what he got.

Jesus had taught this same humility to his disciples when he said, "**Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,** <sup>27</sup> **and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—** <sup>28</sup> **just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many**" (Matt 20:28).

This humility was not a false humility it was completely genuine. When Jesus asks Pilate, <sup>34</sup> **“Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?”**, he is asking Pilate to search his own heart, to search his own convictions to find out why he wants to know. “Pilate, are you asking me if I am a king because you want to know who I am, or are you asking me because you want to check the facts?”

What an honest question? Jesus sees to the heart of the matter immediately. He knows the game Pilate is playing. Pilate’s main job was to keep peace in the province of Judea. He now had a problem on his hands. If this man was really a king and he killed him, that might cause a revolt among the people that followed him. On the other hand, if this man was a king who was leading people against Rome and he let him go..... In either case, he had to find a way to keep peace with these leaders of the Jews or face Roman punishment for not keeping peace in the state of Judea.

Jesus gives Pilate the answer that could have saved Pilate, had Pilate believed it. **“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.”** Jesus’ followers were not gathering somewhere waiting for the sign to revolt. Jesus had come alone, because he was alone. His closest friends had abandoned him.

Jesus was being honest, but it wasn’t honesty that Pilate was expecting. **“You are a king, then!”** It would seem like Pilate had won his game with Jesus. Yet, Pilate still did not understand that Jesus was not playing a game with him. Jesus had come to be found guilty so that he would suffer and die. This would not be a tricky case for Pilate.... Jesus admitted to the charges. **“You are right in saying I am a king.”**

We often look at these answers of Jesus and think about the king he wasn’t. He wasn’t this rebel leader who would raise an army to become king. But, what Jesus said to Pilate was also about who he was. He was being perfectly honest in telling Pilate what kind of a king he was. He a king that was so much bigger than this problem between Jew and Roman. He was a king that was so much bigger than the small view of power that Pilate thought he held. He was a king to be feared more than Pilate and all the Jewish leaders would ever really know. He was a king that loved his people more than anyone could guess. This was a king that guided the history of the world to come to this moment in time so that he, the king, could sacrifice himself and save his people.

Pilate knew that Jesus was different. He saw the humility and honesty, but he did not know what to do with it.

What about us? What do we make of our King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Are we skeptical of who he is and what he has done for us like Pilate? We are often critical of Pilate for not believing in Jesus, but are we any different. If our faith in Jesus were put on trial, what would that trial show about our faith?

Look at the evidence of our life. Would our thoughts show a faith that trusts in God above all things and follows what this King tells us is right and wrong or are we constantly trying to find our own truth that we like better to guide us? Would our words show that we are praising and thanking God for his goodness, that we are sharing his Word with others or do our words show that we grumble and complain against the Lord when we don’t get what we want and that we aren’t sharing the Word as we should? Do our actions show a trust in our king as our Savior or would we rather trust in ourselves and our own goodness?

If our faith were put on trial, we would see that we are often so weak in faith that we don’t trust in God as we should, we trust in ourselves. We don’t look to Jesus as our Savior, we try to make our salvation all about us, and we certainly don’t follow all that God says in his Word, we trade it for another truth.

For these and all our many sins, we need a king that is different from the kings of the world. We need a king who will not punish us when we are disloyal, we need a king who loves us, even though we sin so much, and is willing to forgive us our sins.

Pilate had never seen a king that was so humble and honest and he didn’t know why Jesus would do that. If he would have understood, he would have seen that Jesus was here because he loved his people more than any king could ever love his people. Jesus knew his reason for being on the earth and for being in front of Pilate. It was not to go free, it was to go to the cross to pay for the sins of his people: **for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.**

Jesus whole life had testified that he was something special. From the time he was born, Jesus was already doing his Father’s work. He was born under the Law, so that he could live perfectly under the Law and accomplish something that you and I in our sinfulness never could: he could redeem us from sin, death and the

devil. He had testified to his redemptive work as he taught the people to repent and believe in him. He had testified to the truth that he was sent from heaven to be the only way into heaven.

Jesus whole life was a life of love for you and me. He was willing to take the punishment that Pilate was going to sentence him too. He was willing to suffer on the cross and die so that we would not have to.

Pilate had never seen someone who would selflessly offer himself as a substitute for so many people, even people he did not know and wouldn't love him back. If Pilate could have understood Jesus, he would have seen the love of Jesus for his people.

Jesus stood before Pilate as a king who was ready and willing to humbly, honestly and lovingly die to save the world and that's exactly what our king did for us.

Our king continues to rule from heaven. He rules over all the nations of the earth, over all of the presidents, kings and politicians that rule in the world. We can be sure that no matter what happens, he will continue to rule on high, making sure that his Word goes out into the world and his kingdom comes. Jesus is truly a king like no other.

Pilate didn't understand Jesus because he had never met a king who was humble, honest and loving. This is the king that we need.