

# "The King"

Text: John 18:33-37

As we end another church year – filled again with God's grace – may that same Giver of all good gifts fill each of us with a deep and abiding appreciation for all that he has done and continues to do for us every moment of our earthly existence – culminating in that moment when we get to spend eternity with him in heaven, an unending existence won for us by our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

The more you look into the problem, the more alarming it is that we have grown so accustomed to make-believe in so many different areas of our lives – critical areas where we cannot afford to pretend. The problem caused by the flood of make-believe is that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between truth and lie, fact and fantasy. It all starts when we are little, when parents tell Junior: "Great job, buddy" for that which was anything but. The pretense continues throughout our developing years and on into adulthood. We are told that girls and boys are just alike, when in countless areas they obviously aren't. We are told that no culture is better than another, that guns are more to blame than the people that misuse them, that women have a natural right to murder a child just because of that child's location, and that your gender is whatever you want it to be.

That's the sort of false reality we live with day by day, and the inevitable result is that the clear lines between true and false become ever more fuzzy. The list of such things is endless. Home schooling children is dangerous. All religions are equally good. Stay-at-home moms demean themselves and their gender. Spanking a child for rebellion does irreparable harm. Again, the list is endless – to the point, in fact, that we need to actually struggle to recognize and accept reality *when and where it truly exists*.

So with *reality* and *truth* as our background, let me ask you what is your opinion of the actual, real-life power of your God? I don't mean what is the opinion you know that you are *supposed* to have - since you are a Christian. I mean what truly is your own, personal opinion of the ability of your God to, for example, change the course of this world when you ask him to? Do you, in other words, believe that your prayers are effective, not only in a general way, but also in a personal or specific way? If you pray for a specific thing in your life, do you really believe not only that your God has the power to change things, but that he actually acts upon your requests? Or do you believe that what was going to happen is pretty much what will

happen no matter what you ask for in your prayers – in effect that God is either incapable or unwilling to alter the course of this life?

Many will find the *honest* answers to these questions to be disquieting, unsettling. For most of us to answer honestly it will take some time and introspective meditation. Our text for this morning speaks to this, and more. It teaches us something about both the power of our God and the reason that he cannot always grant our requests. Yet both when God acts and when he does not, the basis for that action is always his love for his children, never his own weakness or impotence. The text that will so guide us this morning is found in John's Gospel, the 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter:

ESV **John 18:33-37** *So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." <sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

This is the Word of God. Acknowledging every word to be not only true but also powerful and effective in our lives day by day, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

The last Sunday of the Church Year has historically been called "Christ the King Sunday." Our Scripture readings and our sermon text were clearly chosen with that label in mind. All three either refer to Christ as a king or speak of his rule or dominion. In fact in our sermon text it is Jesus himself who acknowledges that he is, in fact, a king.

Why is such a thing important? The short answer is that everything that our God chose to reveal about himself is important – and should be considered vital information by every one of his children. Yet there's more to it than just that. When Jesus is our life, how could we not want to know him better? Knowing him better can only strengthen the bond that connects us. We don't have faith in a Jesus that we cannot know or identify. Our faith is focused on – based on – what we *do* know about him, not what we don't. Since he has described himself as a king, we need to know him not just as Savior but also as King.

How then is Jesus a king? What exactly does that mean, to him and to us? It means, obviously, that as a king he both rules and exercises power. As a king he is above the laws that he imposes on his subjects.

We tend to lose sight of this aspect of our Savior-God, mostly because our primary picture of him is of a friend and brother. We see his gentleness, his mercy, his compassion, and those characteristics seem to be at odds with the picture of Christ as King. Go back to our text for this morning. Don't you find it a bit difficult to recognize Jesus as a king at the very moment he confirms that he is one? Pilate certainly did. Human eyes saw a man humbled, friendless, without an army, and condemned to death by a rather obscure Roman government official. And yet we know that he is, nonetheless, exactly what he claimed to be – a king. What are we to make of this? How are we to understand it and what are we to learn from it?

First of all, make no mistake; Jesus had an army at his disposal – an irresistible and indefatigable army. You will recall what he said to Peter when Peter made his clumsy attempt at swordplay in Gethsemane: ***"Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"*** Jesus then went on to provide the key to understanding the entire crucifixion when he said: ***"But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"*** (Matthew 26:52-54) The fact is Jesus didn't lack the army, he refused to use it. Jesus' capture, condemnation and crucifixion therefore didn't prove his weakness; they were in fact the most obvious and telling demonstration of his power. While it was well within both his right and his power simply to crush every single rebellious human being, Jesus demonstrated his true power by showing mercy, by coming not to destroy but to save. The opposite of power is impotence, and Jesus was anything but. Impotence is the inability to resist, or to exercise your will. Jesus, on the contrary, made it clear that he was, in fact, exercising his will: ***"No one takes (my life) from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."*** (John 10:18) With an army of angels at his immediate disposal, Jesus was anything but impotent. He chose the path of the suffering servant rather than the avenging king not because he had no choice, but because of his love for fallen mankind. This serves as irrefutable evidence that there are times in life when the difficult thing is impossible to avoid. When Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane asked his Father to find a way around his suffering, the brutal and yet loving answer was that there was no other way. The hard way was the only way. You and I need to remember that when we come to that same Father with our prayers. Sometimes the answer has to be no, not because our God is weak, but because there is no other way.

This morning, however, we do not focus on that meek, distressed Savior – in large part because *that* Jesus is gone. Mankind saw the last of the lowly, suffering, humble Savior when the breath left his body on Calvary. That Savior will never be seen again. Have you ever stopped to consider that not one bad thing happened to Jesus after his death on the cross? Remember what he said to his disciples even before he ascended to heaven? ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*** Paul said of him in Ephesians 1:20-23 ***"(God the Father) raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him to the church as head over all things."*** Again in Ephesians 4:10 ***"He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things."*** And again in Philippians 2:9-11: ***Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** And finally the image of heaven revealed to John in Revelation 5:11-14: ***Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" <sup>13</sup> And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" <sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.***

*This is our God. This is our Savior – as he is now and will be forever. This is our King. Do not expect to meet him in heaven as he once was but as he now is. Not humbled, supreme. Not impotent, omnipotent. Not lowly, exalted beyond anything we can now imagine. Once he came in poverty and humility to save us. The next time he will come on the clouds with power and great glory not just as a king, but as the King of kings and Lord of lords – "on the clouds with power and great glory."*

From these facts mankind needs to learn several truths. The first is directed both toward all the godless and to our own old Adam. The message is this: *Anyone who expects to find a frail and lowly Jesus when he is called to give account on Judgment Day will be tragically and eternally mistaken. All who expect to find an accommodating and yielding Jesus – a Jesus that refuses to condemn or who is all about compromise – will be disastrously disappointed.* In the Jesus of

Judgment Day they will find nothing soft or meek in the face of rebellion and unbelief. They will not there find a Jesus who, kneeling, draws quietly in the dirt, refusing to exact the appropriate punishment. There, *in his own words*, they will find a Jesus who has absolutely no problem announcing a guilty verdict: **"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"**

That's the first lesson, directed again not just toward the godless but also toward that evil that lingers within every single Christian. Do not allow your own old Adam to turn away from this reality. Force that side of you to look and to see. Use that truth, that reality, to beat that evil that still resides in you into submission. The Jesus who came in poverty and humility to serve and to save has completed that work, and has returned to his former glory. A much different Jesus now resides in heaven. *That* Jesus cannot and will not tolerate evil or unbelief. From *that* Jesus the godless can expect no leniency, no mercy, no reprieve.

The second lesson to be learned by seeing Jesus as he is now is directed not to the unbeliever but to the believer alone: *This is your King. This is your God – as he exists now and as he will exist for all eternity.* To you this vision should hold no fear or uncertainty, for just as his promise to condemn all unbelief is rock-solid certain and immutable, so also is his promise to welcome into his magnificent heaven all those who believe in him. As he will not hesitate to sentence the unbeliever to eternal torment, so he will not hesitate to say to those who were preserved in the faith until the very end of their time of grace: **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."**

This is the power of our King. This is the power that he, moment by moment, places at our disposal, even now. Know that when you pray, this is the King to which you direct your petitions, and such a God – who has promised to hear – most certainly has the power to do what you ask.

Let this also then be the King to which you direct not only your thanksgiving in the week to come – and always – but also the King to which you unceasingly direct your praise and worship. How much easier it is, when we see *this* Savior, to recognize how good and right it is **"whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do,"** to do all to the glory of this great God, our Savior, our King. Amen.

## Scripture Readings

ESV **1 Corinthians 15:20-28** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

ESV **Matthew 25:31-46** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' <sup>41</sup> "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' <sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

# ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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**The Last Sunday of the Church Year – November 22, 2020**

## The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

## The Opening Hymn – 552 (Stanzas 1-5) (Red Hymnal)

"Abide, O Dearest Jesus"

## The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

## The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

**The First Lesson:** (1 Corinthians 15:20-28) In our first reading Paul reminds us not only of Judgment Day and the resurrection of all the dead, but the *reason* why Christians need never fear that day. In fact we ought to eagerly anticipate that day every waking moment, longing always for the return of our Savior Jesus. God grant us hearts that never forget that here we are pilgrims, just passing through.

## Psalm 91 (Supplement page 33)

**The Second Lesson:** (Matthew 25:31-46) Our Gospel reading provides yet another picture of Judgment Day. Note that while we are not saved by our own good works, those works are used as evidence of saving faith – since only a faithful heart can produce a truly good work.

## The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. (Brown Hymnal)

## The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 609 (Red Hymnal)

"Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying"

## The Sermon – Text: John 18:33-37 (Printed on the back page)

**"The King"**

## The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

## The Prayers

## The Pre-Communion Hymn – 325 (Stanzas 1-2 & 5) (Red Hymnal)

"O Thou that Hear'st when Sinners Cry"

## The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

## The Distribution

## The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

## The Benediction

## The Closing Hymn – 552 (Stanzas 6-8) (Red Hymnal)

"Abide, O Dearest Jesus"

## Silent Prayer

**Welcome!** - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!  
**To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion** – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

## Attendance – Sunday (27) Average (30)

### This Week at St. Paul:

<b>Today</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service w/communion
	<b>-11:15 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>-5:45 p.m.</b>	– Confirmation Class
	<b>-7:00 p.m.</b>	– Thanksgiving Service
<b>Next Sunday</b>	<b>-9:00 a.m.</b>	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	<b>-10:00 a.m.</b>	– Worship Service
	<b>-11:00 a.m.</b>	– Fellowship Hour

**CLC News** – The dual parish of Bowdle and Ipswich have called Pastor Del Maas. Pastor Aaron Ude has returned the call to Redeemer of Cheyenne. That congregation has now called Pastor Michael Gurath. Holy Trinity of West Columbia has called Teacher Matt Thurow. Faith of Markesan has called Teacher Quinn Sprengeler.

**Usher/Cleaning List** – A copy of the updated 2021 Usher & Cleaning list is available on the mailbox table.

**Thanksgiving Service** – Our annual Thanksgiving service is scheduled for this Wednesday at 7pm. Confirmation parents and students please note the 5:45pm start time for Confirmation Class.

**Council Meeting Notes** – Five members of the Council, plus the Pastor, met on Nov. 15. The Council voted to resume our regular service schedule and classes, but there will be no food served until conditions improve. The Christmas party is cancelled for 2020. Offerings for October were \$1,069 less than budgeted needs and are now \$5,800 below budgeted needs YTD. A letter of thanks will be sent to Frank Radichel and his daughter Annette Kuehne for their work on the updated church web site. Treasurer Mantz presented a 2021 draft budget. The next Council meeting is scheduled for 12/6 and the Annual Voters Meeting for 12/13, with no fellowship meal.