

“King Jesus?” A sermon by Lee Ireland  
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church  
November 25, 2018, Christ the King Sunday  
John 18:33-37, Revelation 1:4b-8

Let us pray together: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

Pilate asked Jesus, “**Are you King of the Jews?**” King, King of the Jews. Jesus is a king? Yes, Jesus says that he has a kingdom. That would make him a king. We even sang about Jesus as king in our opening hymn today. Rejoice, the Lord is King. The words say that Christ rules o’er earth and heaven.

To many of us here, the idea of a king isn’t something we can relate to. Perhaps when you hear the word king, you think of a form of government from two or three hundred years ago or further back in Biblical times. Today, most countries have what we would consider modern forms of government like parliaments or congresses. Some countries once ruled by a king or queen retain these positions as a figure head with ceremonial duties.

There are countries today that are ruled by kings with unquestioned authority. Because of so many negative examples, we tend to think of that form of government as corrupt or out-of-step with the modern world. Recently, the news has supported this view. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia reinforced this view when we read that, by most accounts, he ordered the brutal killing of a rogue Saudi journalist.

History gives us many examples of kings being corrupt and tyrants. So, we may wonder why Jesus has the title king. Jesus isn’t corrupt. Why does Jesus call himself a king? Let’s stop for a moment and look at the definition of a king. A king is a ruler with absolute authority. His word is the absolute authority for his subjects. For Christ-followers, we believe that Jesus speaks with absolute authority into our lives.

If you don’t care for the idea of Jesus being a king, would you like for Jesus to be called a president? Presidents are elected by the people by popular vote. If Jesus ran for president of the USA, would he get elected.

Jesus said his kingdom is not of this world. Obviously, his behavior is not that of an earthly king! Jesus is not a dictator or tyrant. What are we to make of this kingdom that is not of this world? In this kingdom Jesus offers us another way to live in this world, not in a kingdom ruled by fear, hate and lies. Jesus offers us an alternative kingdom, the kind of kingdom we’d all love to live in – a kingdom of peace and love. A kingdom where we serve each other. A kingdom ruled by a king who wants only the best for us. In short, a community of peace and love.

Let’s look at how Jesus used authority compared to how an earthly ruler, Pilate, used authority. Pilate used power and authority to promote himself with no concern for the community he lived in. Jesus empowered others and showed his humility by washing the feet of his disciples. Pilate used terror and fear to rule. Jesus’ rule brings peace, even in our chaos. Pilate’s followers copied his violent ways and divided people by race and ethnicity. Jesus told his followers to put away the sword and to love and unify people. Pilate’s authority came from Rome. He served at the will of Caesar and his rule could have been ended at any time. Jesus authority comes from doing the will of God and is eternal.

Jesus the king is nothing like the corrupt earthly kings we read about in history books or in the newspapers today. When we hear Jesus say he is a king, we realize that Jesus’ kingdom is unlike anything we know on earth – past or present. It is truly a kingdom not of this world.

As followers of Jesus, we live in this kingdom. We place ourselves in service to others and strive not to lord it over others. We love our neighbors as ourselves. We do not abuse our power and take advantage

of others. In fact, we use our God-given resources to help others who are less fortunate than us, those that Jesus tells us to care for. We reflect Christ's love to those we meet. We encourage others to become subjects or citizens of Christ's kingdom. We allow the Spirit to flow through us so that we can be all that God intends us to be using the talents God has given us.

This is Christ the King Sunday. On this day, I ask that each of us evaluate how we use our influence and power, our privilege and our gifts. Do we seek the best interest of others? Do we seek to please God or please earthly rulers? Do we strive for justice and integrity or scramble for status? Do we imitate Christ the King, the servant lord?

I just asked questions that each of us can answer about ourselves. The behavior of individuals in God's kingdom is important. But how those individuals interact with each other is what is really important for that interaction is what gives that kingdom its reputation. We have a king that has a stellar reputation. We need to remember this fact and live in God's kingdom and contribute to the reputation of that kingdom with positive behavior both as individuals and as the community that makes up of that kingdom.

Our responsibility as a citizen of God's kingdom goes beyond our individual behavior. Last week, the Session asked this gathering how we, as a church, can serve God in this community and the world. Today, I would like to ask each of us to consider how this church, this community of Christ-followers, expresses Jesus' values. How do we demonstrate God's love to this community? Are we caring for the least of these? Are we seeking to please God and not earthly concerns? Are we, as a church, demonstrating God's Kingdom in all that we do and say?

I'd like to close today by reading again some of the verses from Revelation which were read earlier. **Grace and peace to you from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us to be a kingdom to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.**

Christ does indeed love us and through his death and resurrection has made us to be a kingdom to serve God. And I will add, to live as Jesus lived while he was on earth. May God bless our every effort as this church and as individuals who make up this church. WE are all part of God's kingdom.