

King of Glory Lutheran Church
November 23-24, 2024: Christ the King Sat/Sunday
John 18:33-37 “King: Question Mark or Period”
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

John 18:33-37 ³³Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” ³⁵Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” ³⁷Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

Do we put question marks or periods next to Jesus’ kingship in our lives? Jesus puts a period next to truth; He Himself is our embodied King.

This weekend we mark the end of the church year with Christ the King. The church celebrates Christ the King every year at this time. It all began in 1925, when Pope Pius XI instituted a new liturgical observance, the Feast of Christ the King. The Pope felt that the followers of Christ were being lured away by the increasing secularism of the world. They were choosing to live in the “kingdom” of the world rather than in the reign of God. Thus while next weekend begins the Advent season as we await Jesus’ second coming and His coming as a baby in the manger, this weekend offers us opportunity to reflect on the question of **who Jesus the Christ is to us**. Do we, like Pilate, ask the question, “Are you a King?”

Yet, that’s an interesting question for us as Christians and US citizens. Living in this country we don’t have a Lord or King or Duke or Earl to look up to. There are no humans embodying that social role. And we don’t intrinsically understand the systems that support a monarchy. If we did, we would have an idea about bowing down to a Lord or King or Queen. So because words like King and Lord are less tangible, there are questions about what that might look or feel like for our faith.

For pre-enlightenment people (pre 18th century) the King’s roles were clear. He was charged with keeping the peace and protection of his subjects, security and prosperity of the land, both crops and animals. There was hierarchy, one knew their place and a King was responsible for his subjects livelihood and happiness.

But a King could rule at his own whim and pleasure with no restrictions. Which could be terrifying for his subjects. No question.

Even during the time period of the writing of the book of Revelation, the Roman Emperor Domitian, required all citizens, at least once a year, to bow down and worship him, calling upon him as "god and lord." **Christians, who worship only one God and Lord couldn't do that.** The question of who is your king was very real to them. Is it God or Caesar who is our "god and lord"? For Pilate and "the Jews" is it Jesus or Caesar?

Who is our King and Lord? Question mark.

The section of text from John's Gospel this morning, is the trial of Jesus which we usually hear during Holy Week. It is the trial of all trials. Pilate who has power and authority is putting on trial, Jesus Son of God, who has ultimate power and authority. In the exchange between Pilate and Jesus there are no less than 6 questions. Are you the King of the Jews? Do you ask this on your own? So you are king? What is truth?

In this particular exchange, Jesus prefers periods over questions. "You say that I am. My kingdom is not from here. For this I was born and for this I came into the world to testify to the truth."

Pilate thinks that he is putting Jesus on trial. He is in charge of this interrogation. Period. But what he doesn't realize is that Jesus takes control of their exchange fairly quickly. "Is this your own question – am I a King? Or did someone else tell you that?" Question mark.

Jesus wiggles his way between Pilate's thoughts and opinions to find out Pilate's truth. Now we know that Pilate was *cruel and wasn't very fond of being relegated to rule over Palestine. So he wouldn't have much tolerance for anyone threatening his power and Roman authority.*

Are you the King of the Jews? Question mark.

What have you done? Question mark.

Jesus answers with periods. *My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. Period. My kingdom is not from here. Period.*

What Pilate misses is that Jesus is lord, not over a jurisdiction or geographic area, but that Jesus' reign is relational and spiritual. He doesn't have land with boundaries and borders, land locked with other nations. Jesus' rule has power in all times and all places. His is not a domain, but a way of living that is in opposition to everything Pilate stands for.

Pilate is used to hierarchy, systems that dictate who can do what. For Jesus, it's not what, it's only who. Jesus kingdom is made up of people who are not slaves or servants, but faithful followers by choice and discipline. His reign is a way of living, not a way of doing business. Jesus doesn't fight for the top spot; He comes from a triune God head of equal rule and equal reign. You see, Jesus' Kingdom isn't a place or a system that needs management or engineering; it's a perspective on living in love with grace.

Would we go with our Lord to the death? Could we? That is the question mark. When we think of Jesus as King or Lord, do we put a question mark or a period? How does Jesus reign in our lives?

Jesus is King?
Jesus is King.

Jesus doesn't put question marks next to us. He puts periods. Loved. Period. Forgiven. Period. Eternally saved. Period. Freedom to serve. Period. Love your neighbor. Period. No need to fix or worry about life, because I am the way, and the truth. Period.

He reigns over followers in every country of the world, crossing all international boundaries. His jurisdiction is any human heart. He demonstrates His capability in a command for each morning sunrise and every sunset as well. Children are fed through Jesus' subjects who take His commandments seriously. Without Jesus, none of us would have breath in our bodies. The world could come to an end in a millisecond. Period. Exclamation point! Jesus is King!

There is love between friends and love between lovers because of Jesus' kingdom. People are healed miraculously. People die knowing peace. People even have trust in the bad times because Jesus went through pain and suffering himself. Jesus is king? Jesus is King. Period.

Jesus answers prayers from a 4 year old girl in Zimbabwe while speaking to a 80 year old man in Taiwan. He supports and provides tangible love through our gifts to World Hunger... giving shelter to the homeless and compassion for orphans. This is a King like no other King!

Here's the point. We can take Jesus with us everywhere we go. In the car, while washing dishes, taking a breath before a difficult meeting – breathing in God for strength and discernment.

So a story to end. Presbyterian Pastor Robert Munger wrote a sermon, “My Heart, Christ’s Home.” In it he leads Christ through the various rooms in his heart: the library, the dining room, and the workshop. Munger sees the rooms of his heart with new eyes as Jesus walks with him. He is embarrassed about some of his items, and imaginations and thoughts. But he asks Jesus to help him clean up his heart and Jesus is delighted to help. “Certainly! I’m glad to help. I’ve come to handle things like this!” (Pg 7)

It is in the drawing room of Munger’s heart that the Lord offers to meet him every morning. There sits an overstuffed chair and a fireplace. So every morning Pr Munger greets Jesus and they have life giving conversations about love and grace.

But then, the pressures of life mount and Pr Munger begins to shorten their visits or miss a day or two at a time. One morning as he hurried down the stairs, he saw the Lord had lit a fire in the fireplace and was waiting for him. Full of sorrow, Pr Munger said, “My Lord, have you been here all these mornings?”

“Yes, I promised to meet you here every day.”

Pr Munger asked forgiveness and Jesus granted it.

But then Christ continued saying, “The trouble with you is this. You have been thinking of our Bible and prayer time as a factor in your own spiritual progress. Yet you have forgotten that this hour means something to me also. I redeemed you at great cost. I desire your fellowship.”

Jesus wants to be Lord of our Lives. Period. He doesn’t question that. We do.

Amen.

Sermon My Heart: Christ’s Home. Rev. Robert Boyd Munger. Originally published 1954. Newer publishing, Intervarsity Press. 1986. (www.ivpress.com/my-heart-christ-s-home-booklet)