

**Sermon Christ the King Sunday, November 24, 2024, John 18: 33-37,
Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lancaster, Pa., Rev. Timothy W. Sadler**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday of the church year. Only a short month away—we are going to be thinking about a baby in a manger, about a vulnerable, frail and dependent infant...about a holy and silent night, filled with the joy of angels.

But today, we focus on the King. Not only the baby grown up, but the grown up One who died and now lives. We sing about, shout about, and worship Christ the King.

Not it seems to me if this King is at all a reality, then this is still His world, and He still has something to say about what goes on in it, and something to say about where this world is headed.... whether the world listens to Him or not.

But that's the problem, isn't it? It's easy to come into worship and believe in this King and His power to bring life. But then we leave, and we go back out into what we call the real world, and it's all too easy to let the reality of Jesus...slip into the same fantasy as Superman—because out in the real world, it's so much harder to hear the voice of Jesus.

We are people of exile; we don't really belong to this world. We belong IN it, because God has put us here, but we don't really belong TO it. So many times in our lives we find ourselves not quite fitting in.

We find that no matter how carefully we try to build our families, how hard we work, how much we accumulate, it still doesn't give us the sense of place and eternity for which we long.

Amidst the confusion of this life—this feeling of displacement—the feeling of always having one foot on earth and one in heaven maybe, amidst the strangeness of this world where everything seems to be just a little out of balance-----

Amidst all of this, the question that most burns in our hearts is: Jesus, do you still reign? Does your truth still count for something, or has it been lost in the frailties of this life, like so many other things we counted on?

It's hard to figure life out anymore. And we don't know quite how that happened; we just know that it has. There are so many things that we thought would last forever: so many things that slipped through our hands, lost, and gone.

We counted on relationships lasting; we counted on people not dying. We counted on life making sense, and things staying pretty much the same.

Have you ever felt in your life like all Hell has broken loose? And I mean that literally; like the gates of Hell have been opened—and chaos, sickness, death and despair have been unleashed—

And so much is happening that the only way to possibly explain it, is that the forces of Hell are trying their best to bring us down.

I have come to believe that Satan works best when he works to cause doubt and despair in the hearts of the people of God. I don't necessarily believe that Satan causes illness or death, but I do believe...

That Satan somehow has something to do with the timing of some of the things that happen in our lives, because often things are so clustered and so overwhelming, that it seems the only purpose they serve is to defeat the people of God and the only way to get thru them is to stand firm in our faith.

Do we believe that Christ is King? Or have the circumstances of this life caused us to doubt either His power or His love for us? Maybe we think Jesus does love us but doesn't have the power to intervene...

Because if Jesus has the power to intervene, then why doesn't He come to our rescue? If Jesus is truly King, then why this life? Why this life with its illness and death and terrible loss?

I don't know the exact answer to these kinds of questions, but this I do know: when Jesus faced the most painful, suffering time of His life, He testified to a far greater truth than anything that exists on this earth.

When Jesus could've avoided suffering and death—because He certainly didn't need to suffer and die for Himself—when Jesus could've avoided suffering and death, He simply said: "For this I was born..."

We people of God are given a King who is enthroned through the worst possible kind of death. Jesus is no stranger to the things that hurt us and cause us to lose hope. This isn't a King who was raised in a sheltered life within the castle walls.

This is THE King of kings who touched lepers, who loved sinners to life, and who--- when He realized He could only help us by dying—suffered the worst possible thing of all...

Jesus, who is God, experienced a time of separation from God when He took our sin upon Himself. It must have felt as though His very self was being torn in two. That is the pain we humans can only imagine—this forced separation between God and His beloved Son.

Yet, because Jesus experienced that, we don't have to. In Jesus Christ, God never leaves our side. Never.

Do we believe that Jesus reigns—because that's going to make all the difference in how we respond to the garbage of this life that seems to get dumped on us. I don't know why we need to experience this life.

I don't know why we can't just be born into the presence of God in Heaven.

But I think it has something to do with being in a relationship with our God. God doesn't want manufactured robots or puppets—God wants a relationship of love and trust with the people he's created...

and a relationship of love and trust is forged in the everyday reality of life. It is brought into being and strengthened as we live each day, leaning on the Lord of Life regardless of what this life brings.

Surely the fact that Jesus needed to also be born into this life and experience it, tells us something of how important it is...and that living the reality of each day learning to know our God of love and mercy...

Somehow creates a relationship that will be taken into eternity and go on forever.

Isn't it ironic that being the King of all kings meant that Jesus would have to experience the same life we do? We need a king who knows full well what it means to suffer for His people, and who still chooses to be King anyway.

I think the Word of God we heard today is basically asking us if we will listen to our voices of hopelessness, our own sense of being limited and of life being out of sync—or if we'll be willing to risk all that we are and have, and listen to the voice of Jesus...

To live this day and the days to come with no other guarantees, except one—that Christ is King, and he goes with us.

This King testifies to the truth and is continually speaking to His people. This King speaks words that comfort us, transforms us, and challenges us to live this life as though we believe that He has conquered everything that threatens our well-being.

This King seeks to pull us out of our preoccupation with our own suffering and hurt, so that we can live in hope and take His gentle love that heals us, into the suffering and hurting lives of others.

This King sets us on a journey that will probably be the death of us. But this death won't be the end of us, not by any means. On the contrary, with Christ the King, it'll be the only way we ever learn to live. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray,

Gracious Lord Jesus, you are King, and you are mercy. Your life-giving presence permeates our lives and enters every part of us, even those hurting places we sometimes hold away from you. Teach us to more fully allow your healing love in our lives; make us willing to be healed so we might live more completely in trust and hope. Make us people of light whose willingness to be your life, makes a difference in the lives of those outside these walls. Continue your healing, redeeming, creating work among us that the world would look at us and see you. AMEN.

Children / Young at Heart Story

Theme

Christ is the King

Object

A crown

Scripture

John 18:33-37

The crown is a symbol of power and authority. Who do you know that wears a crown? (Pause for responses.) A king or queen wears a crown, right? Being a king is different from being the president of a country. A president is elected by the people, but a king isn't elected, he is born to be king.

Have you seen the movie "The Lion King?" As a lion, Simba was born to be the "King of the Beasts." Simba sings, "I Just Can't Wait to Be King." Simba was anxious to become king because he didn't want anyone to tell him what to do. He also wanted to tell everyone else what to do.

Simba had a poor idea of what it meant to be a king. The *real* role of a king is to look after the needs of his people. A good king is more concerned with caring for his people than he is with being served.

During His last days on earth, Jesus was arrested and put on trial. When asked if He was a king, 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." (Pass around the crown).

Yes, Jesus was a king, but unlike Simba, He was only interested in doing the will of His Father, God. He was born to be king, but His kingdom is not on this earth -- it's in heaven. He only came to earth to make a way for us to live with Him in heaven.

Jesus "just can't wait to be your king." He has invited you to enjoy eternal life in His heavenly kingdom. Will crown Him as your King today?

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for sending Your Son to be our Lord and King. Help us today, and every day, to honor Him, obey Him, and follow His will for our life. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

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