

“CHRIST IS THE KING .. SO WHAT?!!”

Message for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

(Last Sunday of the Calendar Year)

From Pastor Norman Staker

November 23, 2025

JEREMIAH 23: 1-6 ** COLOSSIANS 1: 11-20 ** LUKE 23: 33-43

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND FROM
OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. AMEN. HE IS RISEN; HE IS
RISEN INDEED!!

When they came to the place that is called ‘The Skull,’ they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” It continues, “The soldiers mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself! There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’

Maybe you’re thinking, as I was when I was preparing this message, “what a strange lesson we have this morning to remember “Christ the King.” How can the picture of Jesus hanging on a Cross, with a jeering Roman sign above his head: “The King of the Jews” be appropriate for “Christ the King Sunday?” Surely we should be remembering something mighty. What about Jesus and the whip of cords in the temple? Maybe it would have been more appropriate to read the passage from John 2:12-16, the scene where Jesus makes a whip of cords and drives the moneychangers and their animals out of the Temple. At least that would show Jesus in power! After all – isn’t kingship all about showing off one’s power? Pomp and ceremony?

I would like to suggest to you this morning that Jesus’ kingdom is different from worldly kingdoms. Jesus’ kingdom is made up of the weak and the brokenhearted – not the powerful and the strong. Jesus’ kingdom is made up of those who realize their unworthiness to stand in the presence of almighty God. Jesus’ Kingdom came through the power of the Cross – for it is through the Cross that Jesus would draw those who the Father gave him to himself. The more I thought and mulled over the passage I realized that this was exactly the right passage. Christ’s kingship was shown on the Cross. By the way, how many actual kings died while hanging on a tree? Well, six were killed but only one died while hanging on a tree, hanging on

the cross, Jesus. The other five were killed by Joshua, all kings, but they were killed before being hanged on a tree: the kings of Jerusalem, of Hebron, of Jarmuth, of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. The book of Joshua says that 'Joshua struck them down and put them to death, and he hung them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening. At sunset, Joshua commanded that their bodies be taken down and they "threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves; they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day.' Our King Jesus came out of the tomb after only three days; the others are still rotting away. Just a small history lesson from the OT book of Joshua, in the 10th chapter.

Our lesson this morning showing Jesus in humiliating circumstances, hanging naked on a Cross, challenges us to sit up and think about the nature of God's kingdom. And for me the key to Jesus' kingship is found in Jesus immortal words: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

That was the key to why Jesus came to earth in the first place.

His death enabled us to become Children of God.

That is why Communion is so central to our faith. For it is there that we remember his death that opened the gates of heaven to let us in. Jesus took simple everyday elements, bread and wine, to help us remember.

If I was to ask you, 'who is Jesus,' how would you answer that question? Son of God, Immanuel, the King of kings and Lord of lords, Prince of Peace, so many formal names for Him but just who is Jesus?

Several years ago, the Gallup conducted a poll and asked Americans this very question: 'Who is Jesus?' 42% stated that Jesus was God among mankind, 27% felt Jesus was a great man, divinely called. Most Christians consider Jesus to be the incarnation of God the Son and awaited messiah, a descendant from the Davidic line that is prophesied in the Old Testament. Virtually all modern scholars of antiquity agree that Jesus existed historically. I would hope so!

Sure, it's an old survey and I'm sure the numbers have changed. It is a timeless question. Who is Jesus? It is a question that even the disciples had to answer.

"When Jesus and his disciples were at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked his disciples the question. "Who do people say that I am?" The disciples replied: "Some say

John the Baptist, others Elijah or one of the prophets.” Then Jesus asked, “But what about you?” “Who do you say that I am?” If you have been in church long enough, and nothing personal, but looking around the sanctuary, that would apply to all of you, so I’m sure you are familiar with Peter’s answer. “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.”

Sadly the disciples did not always give that answer. Earlier in the ministry of Jesus, we find this event from the life of Jesus and his disciples recorded in Matthew 8: Jesus and his disciples were in a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. A storm came up suddenly. The disciples, fearing for their lives, woke Jesus who was sleeping. Jesus simply speaks to the wind and the raging waves became as smooth as glass. Instantly, the disciples look at each other and exclaim: “What kind of man is this that even the wind and waves obey him?”

The Jewish religious theologians, the experts, the Pharisees and Sadducees, also question the authority of Jesus. ‘Jesus entered the temple courts and while he was teaching, the chief priests and elders questioned him. By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you authority?’ They understood his words; they just didn’t believe!

Here we are, a couple of thousand years later, and times and people have not changed. The question, “Who is Jesus?” must still be answered in every generation, by every individual.

The Gospel of John states: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The glory of God which filled the tabernacle in the wilderness was now in Jesus. The glory of God that filled the temple when Solomon dedicated the new temple in Jerusalem, was now in Jesus. On the banks of the Jordan River John the Baptizer said, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” Who is Jesus?

Only a just and holy God could satisfy the demands of a holy and just God. John Stott in his book “The Cross of Christ” writes: “If God had sent a man to us, as he sent prophets to Israel, we would have been grateful. If he had sent an angel as he did to Mary, we would have counted it a great privilege. Yet men and angels are creatures of his creative hand. By sending his own son, eternally begotten of His own Being, he was not sending a creature by giving Himself.” “How could the Father’s love have been demonstrated if he had sent somebody else to us? No, since love is in essence self-giving, God gave himself in His Son.” “God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son.”

There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." Today is the last day of the Christian Year known as Christ the King Sunday; we recognize today that Christ is indeed King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Of course for many of us there is a distinct problem, namely we don't know a whole lot about kings, except of course what we read in the papers and see on the news about the Queen of England and her 75 year reign and her very extravagant funeral when she passed away and Prince Charles who is now King Charles and his sons who are in line to each become the future King of England when his father or brother passes away or abdicates the throne.

When we read the gospel accounts of Jesus, we come to this reading in each of the gospels and find that he did not act very much like a king either. He died as a criminal on that cross at Calvary, not as a king going into battle. The people of his day did not recognize him as a king either. It is interesting that just a week earlier he had entered Jerusalem riding on a colt of a donkey, which was the traditional way of entering the city for the kings of old. It meant that they came not as conquerors but in peace to accept the mantle of King of Israel. They also came as saviors not as destroyers.

Next Sunday is the first Sunday in a new Church Year, Advent is a time of preparation for it all to begin. For the Christ to enter into the world as a man, a baby, totally dependent upon his parents, growing up in a small town, learning a trade at Joseph's side. In every way our God became as we are, so we could become as He is. His death in our stead, gives us eternity in the presence of the glory of God. Let us always remember that it is His leadership that began this whole thing we refer to as Church, but He referred to as discipleship. You and I are still called out from our lives as ranchers, business persons, bankers, whatever it is we do as our normal human way of making a living. We are called out to be disciples, followers of a unique way of living, a way that calls us to give of ourselves, to be willing to step out, when others will not. To touch hearts and lives with the gospel of Jesus Christ. A gospel that calls all mankind to return to our creator God and to walk in holiness once more.

One unknown writer had this to say about Jesus: nineteen centuries have come and gone and today he remains the central figure of the human race, and the leader of mankind's progress.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life

of man on this planet so much as that one solitary life.

Yes, Jesus Christ was someone special –unlike Elvis Presley – Jesus Christ is the KING!!!

AMEN!!