

# CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

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Today's gospel lesson may seem strange for the feast of Christ the *King*, but then, if you just imagine the *scene*, it's clear that nobody got the kingship of Jesus *then* either.

- ❖ You have the crowd of people standing by, watching.
- ❖ They'd been waiting for a Messiah, and many even believed that Jesus was him...but now? Just stunned silence.

Then you have the rulers and the soldiers, who had decided that Jesus failed their tests for kingship.

- ❖ So they're triumphantly mocking him, believing that they're still in power.
- ❖ Even the bad thief joins in, voicing the anger and disappointment of so many that desperately cry out to God and don't understand his response.

In fact the kingship of Jesus is *so* confusing that the *first* evangelist, who's *only* present at the cross *indirectly*, doesn't get it *either*.

- ❖ Luke tells us very simply that there was *also* an *inscription over Jesus*, 'This is the *King of the Jews*,' though *John* tells us a little *more*.
- ❖ He adds "Jesus of Nazareth" to the title and tells us that the sign was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, so *everyone* in that time and place would understand it.
- ❖ John *also* lets us know that the chief priests were *furious* at the *insult*, but *Pilate* wouldn't *compromise* – he said, "What I have *written* I have *written*."

And so, with a *total* lack of *awareness* and supreme, *delicious irony*, Pontius Pilate, the first evangelist, declares *definitively* just who Jesus *really* is. First off, we need to understand what it means for Jesus to be "the *King of the Jews*."

- ❖ Jesus is *culmination* of the story of a people *chosen* for a purpose *far* greater than *earthly* glory.

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- ❖ Paul needed some help along the way, but eventually he *got* the kingship of *Jesus*, and.

In every one of his letters we see the message “*Jesus is Lord*,” which is *why* he spent *so* much time in *prison*.

- ❖ You see, in ancient Rome people would greet each other on the road by saying, “*Caesar is lord*” – it was what *everyone* in the empire had in *common*.
- ❖ So for *Paul* to say, “*Jesus is Lord*” wasn’t *nice*, *spiritual* talk – it was *subversive*, it was a *revolution*.

We see the reason for the revolution in *today’s* passage from his letter to the Colossians...

It’s *especially* appropriate, then, that Pilate’s sign sits *high above* everything else.

- ❖ Above the *religious* authorities and the *people*, who’d wanted a *different* message
- ❖ Above the cross *itself*, the sign of *Rome’s* power; that if *you* crossed them, *they* would cross *you* (pun intended)
- ❖ Above *even* *Jesus’* own *death*; because he won’t come down from the cross even death itself is conquered.

The kingdom of Jesus is about much more than any of that – he’s reconciling *all* things to God, making peace by the blood of his cross.

- ❖ So he’s not just making us citizens of an earthly kingdom, like David’s.
- ❖ Jesus is making us members of the eternal royal family.

If you just look at the way the OT talks about God, you’ll start to see just how difficult this would have been for the people at the cross to comprehend.

First, a quick Hebrew lesson: When we see *God* referenced in the OT, it's either as "*Elohim*" or "*YHWH*."

- ❖ "*Elohim*" is the *formal* title reflecting his *infinite majesty*, like what we see in the creation of the cosmos in Gen 1
  - We find "*Elohim*" used about 2,600 times in the OT
- ❖ "*YHWH*" is the *personal name* reflecting his covenant *love*, which we see after God creates *Man* in Gen 2
  - We find "*YHWH*" used about 7,000 times in the OT

Now, the fact that the *Creator* of the *universe* would give us a *personal* relationship is *amazing and* that this would so greatly *surpass* his *majesty* in the *dynamics* of the relationship is even *more* incredible.

- ❖ But here's something *else* – in the *entire* OT, God is only referred to as a "*father*" 17 times
- ❖ For all of the *tender* language of the Jews being God's *own* people, they just *didn't* have *that* kind of relationship.

Now, keep that number in mind while we compare it to the gospels.

In the Sermon on the Mount, his *first* sermon in the gospels, *Jesus* refers to God as Father 17 times.

- ❖ In *John's* account of Jesus' discourse at the Last Supper, his *last* sermon in the gospels, Jesus refers to God as Father 51 times – which is 17 times 3.
- ❖ In between those sermons, Jesus never addresses God in any other way, *and* teaches *us* to pray "*Our Father*."

*That* is what the kingship of Jesus is *all about* – *redefining* the royal family.

- ❖ By the blood of his *cross*, Jesus makes us "*blood brothers*" with him, *partakers* of God's divine nature.
- ❖ This is *far* greater than where we would be if Adam *had never sinned*, which *means* that the cross *wasn't* Plan B – it was God's *chosen throne* from the very *beginning*.

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Take some time this week as we head into Advent and prepare for Jesus' coming by reading the Passion account in chapters 18 and 19 of John's gospel.

- ❖ This is the beginning of Jesus' coronation, the event at the heart of the whole story of God's people.

So as we write the story that "Jesus is Lord" on our hearts and in our lives,

- ❖ let us pray for the grace to do it with the joy and courage of Paul,
- ❖ and to be at least as uncompromising as Pontius Pilate.

That's how we can do our part to make his Kingdom come and to help his will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven.