**Sermon 11/25/18**

**Gospel Reading John 18:33-37**

"Good King Wenceslas" is a familiar [Christmas carol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_carol) which tells a story of a [Bohemian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bohemia) king.

King Wenceslas once set out on a journey accompanied by his page.

They were struggling through harsh winter weather to give [alms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alms) to a poor [peasant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peasant) on [the Feast of Stephen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Stephen%27s_Day) December 26, the [Second Day of Christmas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Days_of_Christmas).

During the journey, his [page](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Page_%28occupation%29) was floundering in the deep snow and brutal wind.

Exhausted, he was about to give up the struggle against the cold weather.

But King Wenceslas encouraged him and urged him to continue by following in the king's own footprints, step for step, through the deep snow.

They both were able to complete their journey safely.

Today is Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday of the church year.

Next Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent,

and the first Sunday of the new church year.

A king is a King by birth, by who he is,

not by who we are, or what we say, or what we think about him.

The question becomes, not is Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the King,

          but is he our King?

Does he rule our hearts and our lives?

Does he have the final authority, the last word over our lives?

As we come to the end of the church year, we celebrate that God is our King, and try to

understand what his kingdom is like, and how we are to live as his people.

Christ is a very special king – one who loves his people.

He took on human form and walked among us,

knowing the pain and agony he would suffer because of it.

He not only put his life on the line for us – he willing gave his life for us.

He did it because he is our King, and we are his people.

He willingly came to earth in human form, and died for us, because he loves

each one of us, and he wanted us to live with him in his kingdom, forever.

Until we enter the heavenly kingdom, he travels with us on our earthly journey,

          guiding, leading, and strengthening us.

He invites us to travel in his footsteps as we struggle through the problems

and difficulties of our journey on earth.

Yet who are we? Why are we so special that Christ would come to earth taking on

human form, suffer death on the cross, and be willing to be our King forever?

We are significant, not because of what we do, but because of whose we are.

We are his people because he says so. Christ is our King because he says so.

As long as we live on this earth we live in two kingdoms.

Yet we know that one day we will live in the heavenly kingdom forever.

A kingdom had just been conquered by Alexander the Great's mighty army.

The defeated king, Porus of India, was brought before Alexander,

who asked how he would like to be treated.

Porus replied: "I would like to be treated like a king."

Alexander said, "Do you have nothing else to request?"

Porus answered: "Nothing. For everything is comprehended in the word "king."

Alexander restored all the lands of Porus to him.

Today reminds us to act as Jesus is our king,

remembering that everything is comprehended in the word "king".

Christ is our king, the greatest king ever to walk the face of this earth.

We get a glimpse of his greatness in his words to Pontius Pilate:

“My kingdom is not of this world.”

His kingdom is not about palaces made out of decorative stones,

or motorcades with security guards.

His palace is not about money and military.

We are part of God’s kingdom.

Not because we have earned it,

but because God has given us a place in His kingdom as a gift.

Jesus’ Kingdom is one where little children are valued as highly,

and maybe even more highly, than clever and accomplished adult people.

His is the Kingdom where might and money mean nothing in terms

of a person’s value, but where humility and sacrifice mean everything.

His is the Kingdom where the weak are not despised but loved.

Jesus is king of the upside-down Kingdom, where the first is last and the last, first.

He said to Pilate, “My Kingdom is not of this world”,

for He had no interest in competing with Pilate at his level.

His power is not that sort of power.

There once were two paintings.

One was a picture of Pontius Pilate, sitting on the governor's throne,

well dressed and well fed, surrounded by his soldiers.

The caption below it read, "The Failure that looked like a Success."

The other painting was of Jesus Christ, bowed down low before Pontius Pilate,

the crown of thorns on his head, barely surviving the scourging

he took to pay for our sins.

The caption on that painting read, "The Success that looked like a Failure."

Pontius Pilate believed he had honor and power.

But Jesus is the true King.

Because He is our king we can trust him.

When he says we are forgiven, we can believe it. The king says so.

When he promises: Remember I am with you always, we can trust him.

When he tells us: I will come and take you with me so you can be with me always,

          we can trust that the gate to heaven is open and waiting for us.

This world is often a very difficult and frightening place to be,

but we are not alone.

We live in this world, yet we also live in God's Kingdom.

In the world, what dominates is

power, punishment, greed, prestige, revenge, and money.

The kingdom of God operates very differently from how this world operates.

Jesus invites us to live a whole new way.

He encourages us to reflect God's light in the darkness of the world.

Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer,

we ask that God's Kingdom would come to us.

God’s kingdom is not a particular place, it is a way of life.

Within God's Kingdom we discover a whole new attitude and approach to life.

Nails didn't hold our king on the cross.      Love did.

When Jesus went home, he left the front door open.

Because of the king he is,

We try each day to live as if Christ really is King:

King of the world,

King of our life,

King of the church,

King of everything we do, King of everything we say, King of who we are.

Imagine the difference if we, each of us, let Christ be our king each day.

AMEN