**SUNDAY, 11/21/21**

**SERMON**

**JOHN 18:33-37**

The date was September 22, 1993.

Near Mobile, Alabama there was a railroad bridge which spanned a big bayou.

It was a foggy morning just before daybreak

 when a tugboat accidentally pushed a barge into the bayou.

The drifting barge slammed into the bridge.

In the darkness no one could see the extent of the damage,

 but someone on the tugboat radioed the Coast Guard.

Moments later, an Amtrak train, the Sunset Limited,

 reached the bridge as it traveled from Los Angeles to Miami.

Unaware of the damage, the train crossed the bridge at 70 mph.

There were 210 passengers on board.

As the weight of the train crossed the damaged support, the bridge gave away. Three locomotive units and the first four of the train's

 eight passenger cars fell into the alligator infested bayou.

The darkness and fog was thickened by fire and smoke.

Six miles from land the victims lay as food for the aroused alligators.

Helicopters were called in to help rescue the victims.

They were able to save 163 persons.

Gerry and Mary Chancey were waiting in the railcar

 with their 11-year-old daughter.

Suddenly the car shifted and began to rapidly fill with water.

Together they pushed their young daughter through the window

 into the hands of a rescuer.

They loved their daughter so much

 they were willing to give their lives so she could live.

Jesus loved us so much He died on the cross

 so we could live forever with Him.

Because of who He is – we are changed – forever.

He is our King and we live in His Kingdom.

He leads and guides us through each day.

He forgives all our mistakes.

We are so important to Him,

 He is with each one of us each day.

His Kingdom is not simply a particular place,

 it is a whole new way of life.

Alvin Straight, was seventy-three years old.

He lived in Laurens, Iowa.

His brother, Roger, age eighty,

 lived several hundred miles away in Blue River, Wisconsin.

Alvin's brother had suffered a stroke, and Alvin wanted to see him,

 but he had a transportation problem.

He didn't have a driver's license because his eyesight was bad.

And he apparently had an aversion to taking a plane, train, or bus.

But Alvin didn't let that stop him.

In 1994 he climbed aboard his 1966 John Deere tractor lawn mower

 and drove it all the way to Blue River, Wisconsin.

He loved his brother, and wanted to see him.

So he found a way.

Each day we should find a way to see and follow Jesus.

He is our King, the King of Kings.

When we follow Him, it makes all the difference in our lives.

Twelve-year-old Timmy lived far out in the country in the late 1800s.

He had never in all his life seen a circus.

One day a poster went up at school announcing

 that next Saturday a traveling circus was coming to the nearby town.

Imagine his excitement.

He ran all the way home with the wonderful news.

He found his father working in the fields and asked: "Daddy, can I go?"

Although the family was poor, Dad knew how important this was to Timmy.

"If you do your Saturday chores ahead of time," he said,

 "I'll see to it that you have the money to go."'

Saturday morning finally arrived, and the chores were done.

Timmy stood by the breakfast table, dressed in his Sunday best.

His father reached down into the pocket of his overalls and pulled out a dollar bill. Dad warned him to be careful, and sent him on his way to town.

Timmy was so excited, his feet hardly seemed to touch the ground.

As he neared the outskirts of the village,

 Timmy noticed people lining the streets,

 and he worked his way through the crowd

 until he could see what was happening.

Proceeding down the street was the spectacular circus parade.

It was the most wonderful thing Timmy had ever seen.

Caged animals snarled as they passed,

 bands marched down the street blaring our fantastic music,

 midgets performed acrobatics,

 while flags and ribbons swirled overhead,

 and the parade went on and on.

Finally, after everything else had passed by,

 along came circus clowns with brightly painted faces,

 baggy pants and floppy shoes,

 signaling the end of the parade.

As the last clown passed by,

 Timmy reached into his pocket and took out that precious dollar bill.

Handing the money to the clown, he turned around and went home.

Timmy thought he had seen the whole circus but he had only seen the parade.

We often believe we know all about our King.

However, if we stay close to Him we often discover so much more.

We are part of God's kingdom.

Not because we have earned it,

 but because Jesus has given us a place in His Kingdom as a gift.

He is the King of love and forgiveness.

 He loves us.

 He forgives us.

 He saves us.

 He accepts us.

 He welcomes us.

 He changes us.

He is the King we can trust and follow.

He is the King we can thank every day.

A Congregation decided to have a special theme throughout Lent.

They called it: "Forty Days of Love."

Each week members of the congregation were encouraged

 to show their love and appreciation

 by sending notes to people who had made

 a difference in their lives.

After the first service Douglas talked with the Pastor.

 "I love you, and I love this church, and I love this congregation.

 But I'm not going to participate in this "Forty Days of Love" stuff.

 It's OK for some folks," he said,

 “but it's a little too sentimental and syrupy for me.”

A week went by and the next Sunday Douglass

 waited after church to see his pastor again.

"I want to apologize for what I said last Sunday," he told him,

 "about the Forty Days of Love.

 I realized on Wednesday that I was wrong."

“Wednesday?" his pastor asked. "What happened on Wednesday?”

"I received one of those letters," Douglass answered.

 "The letter came as a total surprise.

 It was from a person I never expected to hear from.

 It touched me so much I carry it in my pocket all the time.

 It said I had encouraged him went he was down,

 and it made a big difference his life,

 and he thanked me for helping him when he was discouraged."

Douglass paused and then added: "Every time I read it, I get tears in my eyes.

 Suddenly I realized I was loved by others in the church.

 I was so moved by that letter, I sat down and wrote ten letters myself."

Douglass looked at others differently

 and began to appreciate how important it is to thank others

 for making a difference in our lives.

Thanksgiving is important.

It is good that Christ the King Sunday and Thanksgiving come so close together.

It is good when we remember what Christ has done for us

 And we take the time to thank Him.

AMEN