



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN!

Today is Christ the King Sunday, the last Sunday in our church year. And it is rather usual that it comes right before our Thanksgiving celebrations. So not only do we look forward to that wonderful family meal, but we also need to weather the hours of football including the Packers late in the evening, “Black Friday”, more football on Saturday and Sunday and “Cyber Monday” are close behind. And this morning our Gospel reading is not from Mark, who we have been reading for the last year, but it is a reading typically read on Good Friday from the Gospel of John. So, with all that upcoming commotion, how on earth do we concentrate on the festival of Christ the King?

The readings can help us with that, for today they do afford us an opportunity to claim Christ as King of our lives and to be able to see Christ as the true King in all his glory. Our Old Testament reading from Daniel, who makes claim to the fact that the “Ancient One,” who took his throne in his white as snow clothing, is still ruling. God’s kingdom will never pass away. Daniels words are words of hope to a people that faced great suffering. The kingship of God will be everlasting and will never be destroyed. This was the King that Daniel wanted the people to come to know and trust.

Our second reading today from the New Testament continues with the prophecy of Daniel that the reign of our almighty king is and was from the beginning and will be forever. All glory will belong to Christ forever and we will be his kingdom as he says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty”. The good news here is that we will be in the presence of God who is still and forever in control. No matter what we face in life, no matter how hopeless our situation seems, God will be with us.

Our psalm for today begins with “The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.” This sounds more like a king that the people were expecting, the type of king that all of Israel was used to. But Jesus did not come seeking to be what the people expected. Even from the prophesies of the Old Testament prophets they expected a different kind of power and might. He did not come wearing a crown, riding on a white horse, and wearing robes covered in jewels. Jesus came as a babe in a manger, and it is going to be His birth that we will talk more about during Advent.

This morning, I would like to concentrate on John’s Gospel. This reading is often called the trial of Jesus, but to me it seems more like Jesus once again had turned around the situation and has put Pilot on trial. Jesus is the one asking the significant questions. Pilate does ask if Jesus is King of the Jews. But Jesus wants to know if he is asking of his own accord or did others tell him about Jesus? Then Pilate says he is not a Jew but then asks Jesus “am I?” Pilate seems so confused in Jesus’

presence that he does not even know who he is, whom he owes allegiance too. And Jesus continues by saying that He is not of this world. More confusion for Pilate and so Pilate asks his original question once again. "So, are you king of the Jews?" Then Jesus admits that he is King because Pilate said He was. Jesus goes on to say that he was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. And then the big declaration, Jesus says, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Jesus came into this world to tell the truth to all people, for all time. So, if you want to hear the truth, you must listen to Jesus. If we were to read the next verse of this text, we would hear Pilate ask Jesus, "What is the truth?" These discussions went on for quite some time and I believe Pilate came to recognize Jesus as the King.

Where does all that leave us this morning: Do I listen to Jesus? Am I able to hear the truth? Is the true King in my life Jesus Christ? The truth, the real truth is that God loves us so much that He sent his only Son to earth to save us from our sins. Jesus died on the cross and rose again to secure for us the forgiveness of all our sins abundant life here on earth in His Kingdom and the promise of eternal life in heaven with Him some day. So, do you believe that Christ is King of your life?

There are three possible answers to that most important question: Yes, No and Maybe/Sometimes.

The No response comes from those that have a kingly complex all their own. They said that they are king of their own lives and believe that they are in total control of what goes on in their lives today and they direct their future. Our world is very much accustomed to and even praises this sort of thinking. When I was young one of my favorite songs was Elvis Presley's "I Did It My Way". Many of you may know the song as many others have sung it over the years. No matter the artist that records it, the song speaks very clearly to the fact that I can control the destiny of my life. As a teenager, this song spoke to me as I was trying to break free of the influence of my family, my parents in particular. I was anxious to get out on my own and do it my way. This transforming notion says that whatever I want or do in life is OK because I did it my way. Superficially, that sounds quite good, but now I see that it would be a quite selfish way to live. Looking out for only number one, ME and no one else.

Many parts of our society tell us that this is the way to be successful today. Success is to amass great wealth and power. And in order to do that people may think they must be in control of everything. It doesn't matter how you get power and wealth, as long as you do it your way. It doesn't matter how many people you step on or hurt on the way to that sort of success, as long as you do it your way. You care about only your own needs and wants. This attitude would be one of being your own king, thinking that you are so powerful that you do not need Christ in your life. Living a life that way says "No" to Christ because they listen to their own truth.

The second answer we might give for our questions is maybe or sometimes. Is Christ the King of your life? Do you know His truth? You respond with the title of one of my favorite musicals, "The King and I". Both Jesus and I are both in control. You have one foot firmly planted in this world of me, me, me and yet you seek something more. But you just cannot come to commit to Jesus Christ fully. You want to retain control over parts of your life. This is a sometimes, but not always, a mentality that can be very dangerous. Some areas of my life, I let God in and others I do not. Sometimes I believe that Christ is in control of my life, and sometimes not. This wishy-washy attitude can be harmful. Jesus can be King of your life, most of the time, but what will happen when you do it your way? How can you hear the truth of Christ when you listen only sporadically? You listen only when you want to or when you feel the need to hear God's truth. When it is convenient.

And the last alternative is to answer YES. This response is the one that Christ wants us to make. Jesus wants us to know His truth and to listen to his voice. This response is the one that says Christ is King of my life. How about another song title here, "Always and Forever"? Remember that one by Heatwave in 1976. "Tomorrow will be the same, a life of love that will never change". Saying yes to Jesus means just that. His love for us will never change and ours for Him will stay constant as well. And because of that great love affair, saying yes allows Jesus to have complete control over our lives. You know this to be true. You listen to our Lord and King.

We are aware that we are sinful humans in need of forgiveness. We fall at the foot of the cross and give our sins over to Jesus. Then and only then we can feel the grace and mercy, love, and compassion of Jesus as he declares to us that we are free from our sins. The truth, God's truth sets us free. Pride, selfishness, arrogance are put to death as we give ourselves to the King of Kings. All the dark corners of our lives, every hidden thought, every secret worldly desire is given up to Christ. This is especially important as only Christ has the power to cleanse us totally from such sins.

It is the realization of this forgiveness that comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. This grace of God that we are given freely is not something we can earn. It is not something we can buy, for Christ has done that for us by this death and resurrection. We need only to believe that truth. God loves us so much he sent his only Son to die for us so that we can have forgiveness and abundant life. And the knowledge of this truth comes from listening to our God when He tells us that he loves us so much, His love encompasses the whole creation, now and for all time. By saying YES, we hear God's voice, and give our lives totally to God because we trust that His promises are true.

We follow our King in His mission and ministry. Listening carefully to God's call to care for our neighbor and share the joy that we feel in giving our lives over fully to Christ.

I would like to share a story with you. First of all, I have to say that when I listen to a news bleep about the King of England and his family, Rodney goes bezerk. He is quick to remind me that they are just people, like us, that get into the news because of a birthright, one that has little meaning today. Well, here goes as story I read this week from Dr Mickey Anders.

Princess Diana was not a king, but she was royalty. She was the beautiful, fairy-tale princess. Americans, have chosen not to have kings and queen, watched her wedding by the thousands. Were you one of them? I was. Two billion people watched her funeral. Me too! In the media coverage of her tragic death and funeral, everyone wanted to talk about what made Diana special. Was it her beauty, her accessibility, her vulnerability, her compassion, and the list went on. But the key to what Diana did was this: that the Princess of Wales Majesty stooped. She certainly had her flaws, but her greatness came when she was willing to lay aside the trappings and prerogatives of royalty to be with those who were downtrodden. Diana had an amazing ability to communicate her concern for the wretched of the earth. One American physician accompanied her on hospital rounds where there were no cameras. He said she did not hesitate to caress and linger beside patients with disfigurements and symptoms that were distressing even to media personnel. That capacity, the doctor emphasized, cannot be faked.

You see royalty stooped. The princess let go of her right to be served and became the servant. She did not pay someone else to minister to the sick and dying people, but walked among them, caressing and comforting them. Jesus is THAT kind of king. And shouldn't that be the way we understand Christ the King?

So now, what will you answer be when you are asked if Christ is King in your life? NO, I did it my way. Maybe sometimes, "The King and I" will work together or YES "Always and Forever".

I pray that you will say Yes and that you will let Christ the King be the Lord of your life. While he rules as suffering servant, Jesus will stoop to where we are, with his unconditionally love and grace. Hebrews 13:8 says, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever." So, go proclaim that Christ is King always and forever! AMEN