

## “Leader? ... Who says so?”

John 18:33-37

November 25, 2018

This week during bible study, the word **King** jumped out at me. *King* the male sovereign of a nation, especially a hereditary sovereign of an independent nation. In a round about way, the preceding got me thinking LEADER! – man does my brain work in weird ways.

“Leader, Who says so?” Depending on the context, that question can be more than intimidating. Are you a leader in your church or community? Are you in a position of authority? Who says so? Does the title be-stowed by a person or group make you a leader?

Pilate asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Behind Pilate’s probing inquiry stands an insidious “Who says so?” The question of “who made Jesus King” is important. The person or group that confirms a title often believes they have the right to define the role the title-bearer should play. Confirming a title can also carry a self-serving component.

Pilate really wants an answer to the question. If the Jews consider Jesus their king, then Jesus would be a threat to Rome’s power, and we know what Rome does to people who threaten them – think Hannibal, Mark Anthony and Cleopatra, Spartacus; to name a few.

In today’s democratic societies, people elect leaders to power. In effect, the voters bestow the title. An elected leader’s title puts him or her in a position to lead – but who determines the rightful path of leadership? As electors, voters often feel entitled to lobby and press the elected person to carry out their wishes. Should an elected leader attempt to do the unorthodox, a “who says so” rebuttal usually is forthcoming.

When Pilate thought of a leader/king and when we think of a leader in 2018 they both share something. Both these leaders are earth bound. No matter what kind of leader exists in our world – military conquest or voter popularity – they are leaders here on earth. Contrast that with Jesus’ words, “My kingdom is not from this world.” The kingdom Jesus speaks of does not adhere to earthly rules and expectations.

In Jesus’ kingdom, might and popularity do not constitute sufficient qualifications for leadership. God bestows titles, roles, and purpose.

And yet we live in a world where oppressive regimes exist and it’s understandable that some people might be asking the question, “If Christ is King, what is he king over? Why has he not taken control of this world?”

I’m surprised that, in the situation described in today’s reading, Pilate was not sarcastic or rude, when Jesus claimed to be a king. I’m surprised he didn’t laugh or scoff or say, “King? Who says so?”

Jesus explains here that he is not the type of king people have come to expect. He shows us what it means to call him king.

When Pilate questioned him, Jesus had a disturbing confidence, as if he were in complete control. I remember watching a bit of the Thanksgiving football game on

Thursday night. I was listening to the colour commentator, a former football player and coach. The one particular play I remember, he described what the quarterback was going to call, where the ball was going to be thrown and what he expected to happen. TOUCHDOWN! Of course, this colour commentator neither caused nor knew the future, but his confidence was striking because of his experience.

Jesus had confidence in what he knew of the future. Earlier in John he told his disciples "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." Jesus Christ is the king of all events. We can rest on this.

When Pilate asked Jesus if he were a king, Jesus said, "Do you ask this on your own?" Jesus knew Pilate's heart and his motive, and Jesus knew the perfect response. Jesus asked Pilate where he got the idea that he was a king, he knew what Pilate was thinking, and knew the most effective response. God knows our thoughts and speaks to us. Jesus promised this, he promised that his Spirit of truth would speak to us. Jesus Christ is King. Listen to him.

Pilate told Jesus that it was his "people" who handed him over. This raises the question, who were Jesus' people? Pilate assumed the answer to be ethnic: the Jews. But Jesus says that his followers could have kept him from being arrested by the Jews. And Jesus said that his people are those on the side of truth and that his sheep know his voice; they don't follow the voice of a stranger. Jesus is the king of the loyal. Follow his voice.

Listen to verse 36 carefully - "My kingdom is not of this world." Jesus doesn't say his kingdom is in the future or was in the past but that it exists now; it is. But Jesus also says what his kingdom is not - it is not of this world. Christ's Kingdom is not like the one Samuel warned Israel about; constantly at war, filled with corruption and facing higher taxes. Christ's Kingdom is not like the kingdom where the rulers "lord it over" their subjects. Christ's Kingdom is not like the ones Satan tempted him with while in the wilderness.

We have an image of a king and we expect Jesus to do what kings of this world do. Jesus Christ is not a king of this world. His kingdom is not upheld by weapons but held up by a cross. According to worldly wisdom, Christ is the king of fools. According to what Jesus said, he is King now. Today, let's be like Jesus, let's be a little counter culture, let's change the way we look at Christ the King, who reigns now.

"For this I was born", Jesus tells Pilate. It's laughable for anyone to speak of the reason they were born, as if we have any measure of control in the situation. C. S. Lewis remarked that Jesus exhibited "asinine fatuity" when he said things like this.

Jesus was born to be crucified, to rise and conquer death - for us. In spite of our rebellious nature Jesus gave himself for us, each one of us. Jesus is the king of the rebellious. Let's change our hearts before the king of the rebellious.