

SERMON

“CHRIST, OUR KING”

Preaching text: John 18:33-37

Today is known as Christ the King Sunday. The origin comes from an interesting time in our world's history. In 1925 Pope Pious XI wanted people to know that this is Christ's world, not the world of the emerging dictators of that day. Mussolini had been in power for 3 years. Adolf Hitler had been out of jail only a year. He was finding great popular support for his fledging Nazi party. The pope declared that despite dictators or other political affiliations, that Christ was King. As Christians, that is where our ultimate loyalty should be. Not to political leaders or anything else, but to Christ Himself.

Christ the King. That is a radical idea these days. It shouldn't be a radical idea, but in today's world it is. Our first allegiance is to Christ. Not to our political party. Not to the opinion of our family, friends or neighbors. Not even to our nation. But to Jesus Christ.

That can be a risky thing to say from a pulpit in 2021. There are some people today who confuse their political views with allegiance to Christ, and they are not bashful about branding those who disagree with them as enemies of the Gospel. We've seen the same kind of behavior before. In earlier generations, the battle to keep black people out of schools, libraries, and even public drinking fountains. Some Christians framed the argument in religious terms. In their eyes it was God's will to keep the races separated.

Be careful if you baptize your political views. You may one day find yourself on the opposite side from Jesus. One way to avoid this is to keep in mind that question, "What would Jesus do?" Then we might be able to guess what side of a political issue we should embrace. Not always, as some political positions are complicated, but most of the time. If it is the loving thing to do you can bet that would be where Jesus would stand.

Don't misunderstand. Christians should be involved in politics. But politics is about compromise, not principled discipleship.

We show this allegiance to Christ by how we live our lives. The best way to express our allegiance to Christ is to live out our faith. How do you live what you profess to believe? Does your faith make a difference in how you serve others?

This is an interesting time to be a part of the Church. With churches being closed for as long as they were because of the pandemic people got out of the habit of doing certain things. Going to church was only one of them. But because of that there were drop-offs in other ways too.

I can understand that part of not being able to come to church had its advantages. It was kind of nice to have a little more time on Sunday morning without thinking about what time we needed to be at church. I have had people comment on how it was nice to have breakfast and then watch us online in their bathrobes. I'm sure part of that was very cozy.

There has been an unfortunate side of this disconnection. Because we got used to our worship being only what we experienced on-line we lost maybe the most important dimension of worship. When we come together, it is about more than being spoon fed how much God loves us. True worship is taking what we believe and living it out. When we come together we make a difference for others. Through our outreaches and our offerings our coming together makes a difference.

I think the most regrettable side-effect of the pandemic is that not being able to come to church really took us off the hook of our responsibility to make a difference. I had a conversation with someone who has always been faithful to what he believes. I asked him if he could help serve. His answer was an unapologetic, "I am not busy. I am enjoying myself. I'm not interested."

We are having the toughest time I can ever remember getting people to serve. If you have slipped into a comfortable sense of "God loves me" without an understanding that we have a responsibility to each other, you need to get back to Christ being your King.

I think of the food baskets we give out each year. There are so many people in our society for whom Thanksgiving is no more than gorging themselves on food and wasting away a perfectly good weekend on naps and football. But those of

you involved in providing for the food baskets, for those of you who bring food for the food pantry, that is making Christ your King. Being a Christian is a call to a higher way of life.

We demonstrate our allegiance to Jesus by how we live. But Jesus demonstrated his love for us through his life, death and resurrection. Jesus lived life just as we do. He knew what it was like to want to be liked, to want nice things, and the temptation to live for himself. But think about how tough his life really was. You think you had it rough as a kid? Jesus was born in a barn. His first bed was a feeding trough. He wasn't even 2 years old, and people were trying to kill him. He has to hide out with his mom and dad on the run. That went on his whole life. People were always planning to kill him ... eventually they did.

Did you grow up being laughed at and kicked around? Imagine Jesus hearing the laughs about his mom being pregnant before she was married, getting teased and spit at by other kids because of it.

Did you grow up without a mother or father? Divorce, death, or maybe one just walked out on you? You know, Joseph is never mentioned after Jesus is 12. Nobody knows for sure what happened to him, but most experts think he died when Jesus was a kid. Yeah, Jesus knew heartbreak. Imagine him standing at his dad's grave. As the eldest son, he'd have to carry on and support the family. Imagine Jesus in his dad's workshop that first day, reaching for his father's tools, tears streaming down his face ... and he was just a kid.

Ever had your face beat in? The Bible says Jesus was beat so badly you couldn't even tell he was a human being.

Ever have your friends run out on you? Jesus had a couple of choice buddies named Judas and Peter.

Jesus knows what we go through. He knows every struggle. Every heartache. And not just because he is God and God knows everything, but because he was a man. He went through the same things we do and more. He knows because he lived it.

Christ is our King because he did all of that for us. We owe Jesus our allegiance. We demonstrate that allegiance by how we live. How did Jesus say we show him love? By doing good things for others. In other words, find a way to serve. Make a difference. Live a life of significance. Make Christ your King!

AMEN.