

3 Ways Christ is a King

As usual, today, we heard three different readings from the Bible. Since it's Christ the King week, each of our readings focuses on a different world in which Jesus is king.

Daniel chapter 7 shows us the big picture. Jesus is the cosmic ruler of all time. It says, **"His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."** (Daniel 7:14). You can see the world of Daniel 7 when you sing, *"Oh Lord our Lord, how glorious is your name in all the earth!"*

Our second reading was from Revelation chapter 1, where we dream about the future. In the future, we will see Jesus as the king of heaven. It says, **"Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen."** (Revelation 1:7). Your brain pictures a Revelation 1 world when you sing, *"Amen, Amen! Lord Jesus, come! My Savior fair, come bear me home. For you are King of kings alone! Alleluia!"*

Jesus is the king of eternity, the king of heaven. But what about this world? Like, this afternoon, whatever you've got planned, is Jesus in charge of it? Or the thing that kept you awake at night recently is Jesus king of that? In regular life, when nothing is cosmic or heavenly when you don't see any angels or hear any trumpets, is Jesus the king? Sometimes it doesn't seem like it.

That's why on Christ the King weekend, we have one glorious picture of Jesus from Daniel, another glorious picture of Jesus from Revelation, and a no-so-glorious picture of Jesus from John chapter 18. In John 18, Jesus stands with both feet firmly planted in this world, not in heaven. He's living in a human timeline, not some cosmic history. And he's talking with Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor. Here we find out...

Is Jesus the King of Everyday Life?

1. He was back then.
 2. He still is today.
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John 18:33-37

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

35 “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

36 Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

37 “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

The Day Jesus Met Pilate

Friday morning, Pilate awoke to the sound of a crowd outside his house. You see, the night before, some leaders from the Jewish religious community had arrested Jesus. They wanted to kill him, but Roman law said that only the Roman governor could sentence someone to death. So they needed to accuse Jesus of a crime that would matter to Pontius Pilate. Here’s what they came up with: **“We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king.” (Luke 23:2)**

If Jesus was trying to be a rival ruler competing with Caesar, that’s treason. So Pilate asks Jesus one question, **“Are you the king of the Jews?” (John 18:33)**

Jesus Did Not Look Like a King

But Jesus did not look like a threat to Caesar. He didn’t have a crown. He didn’t even have a sword. In fact, when his followers drew their swords to defend him, he scolded them. **“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders.’” (John 18:36)** And so it looked to Pontius Pilate like Jesus had no power at all. Is he a king? Well, he doesn’t look like a king! But looks can be deceiving.

Have you ever seen these people who make cakes that look like other things? It looks like a shoe, but actually, it is a cake. It looks like a bag of Doritos, but in truth, it’s a cake. Looks can be deceiving, but there’s another way to know the

truth. When people serve trick cakes, sometimes the baker has to tell the eater what it is.

Jesus Told Us He Was A King

That's what Jesus has done for us. He told us that he is a king, and Christians believe him. We have faith. Often what we know by faith is the opposite of how things look by appearance. It looked like Pilate had all the authority. "Pilate said. **'Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?'**" (John 19:10) But Jesus said that he was in charge. **"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."** (John 10:18) The looks of Jesus' trial were opposite of Jesus' what Jesus said. In the end, which one was correct, the looks or Jesus' word?

Looks can be deceiving. That's why it's so hard to see Jesus ruling in our everyday lives. Because often it looks like he's not doing anything at all. Was Jesus a king? You bet he was. It looked like Pilate was had all the authority, but Jesus was in complete control. When Pilate condemned Jesus to death on the cross, it looked like Jesus was a total failure, but in truth, he was winning the salvation of billions of people. It looked like Pilate could save Jesus' life, in truth, but Jesus was trying to save Pilate. Pilate was the one in trouble, and Jesus was the king—just the opposite of how it looked.

So what about your everyday life? Is Jesus still the king? Well, it might not look like it, but looks can be deceiving.

Martin Luther and the Heidelberg Disputation

Martin Luther loved to talk about our lives so often look like suffering and hardship when God is doing great things. Luther's most famous writing is probably the 95 Theses. Written in Germany, 1517, the 95 theses went viral. Everyone was talking about them, and Luther's ideas. So one year later, the church leadership asked Luther to explain his new teaching by writing another document. In 1520, in the city of Heidelberg, Germany, Luther presented the real heart of Lutheranism. In that document, he wrote this: **"A person deserves to be called a theologian, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."** Luther is saying that a true theologian sees God how? Not by seeing great powerful acts, not through mountaintop experiences. Sure—God can do those big fancy things, and sometimes he does! But a true theologian sees what God is doing through the suffering of everyday life. God works when it looks like he's not.

Jesus is King on the Cross

Do you want to know if Jesus is a king? Look at him on the cross, in suffering. It looks horrible, but there he did his best work, his most powerful work, he saved the world. When Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate when he was crucified, died, and was buried, that's how he conquered your sin and mine. That's how he defeated our enemies.

It's great to picture Jesus as a King on the throne in heaven, but most importantly, Jesus is King through his suffering and on the cross—but it sure didn't look like it. That's how Christ is the king in your life; it doesn't look like it.

Jesus is King through the Scriptures

For example, a woman's everyday life has not been going well for a few weeks, so she resolves to bring God into her life. She grabs her Bible, opens the cover, and reads the first page, and afterward, she feels nothing. From the looks of it, from the feel of it, God didn't help her at all. None of her problems went away, and she didn't even understand some of the things she read. But God has promised that **“faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” (Romans 10:17)**. God promised that he would build his kingdom in her heart as she reads the Bible. But it looks like God's Word did nothing.

Which one is true, the appearance or God's promise? Ask the 90-year-old who lay in the hospital and said, “Pastor, just read me a page from the Bible.” Looks can be deceiving. Turns out Jesus is ruling in your heart, through his word, as he promised, even when it doesn't look like it.

Jesus is King in Sickness

Consider the young man who gets the breathtaking diagnosis: I'm sorry. It's cancer. So begins a grueling treatment plan that leaves him flat on his back, exhausted. From the looks of it, God is nowhere to be found. It certainly appears that Jesus has forgotten this young man. But looks can be deceiving. God promised that **“all things work for the good of those who love him.” (Romans 8:28)** All things, even evil things—and cancer is an evil thing— even that can end up being good. But it doesn't appear that way.

So which one's true, the appearance or God's promise? Ask that man, six months later, and he's never said more prayers in his life. He's never listened to more Christian podcasts, never sang hymns the way he did during his treatment, he's

never been closer to his Savior. As his body wastes away, he regains his soul. Yes, looks can be deceiving. Turns out Jesus was ruling that man's life, even when it didn't look like it.

Jesus is King in Guilty Feelings

What about the man who looks at his face in the bathroom mirror and shakes his head in shame? Morning after morning, it's all regret and disgust. Laying in bed, he relives his secret sins and his every failure. From the looks of it, this man is morally bankrupt. In his own eyes, he is the worst sinner who ever sinned. But looks can be deceiving. The Bible says, **"to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness."** (Romans 4:5) The more that Satan convinces this man that he's ungodly, the more perfectly he fits the description of someone God considers righteous. God calls this sinner a saint, not by appearance but by faith.

So which one is true, the appearance or the promise? Ask that man as he stands in church and hears himself say, as if for the first time, "I am altogether sinful from birth, and I have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions." Then he hears familiar words like he's never heard them before, "As a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins." Turns out Jesus is the king of his guilt even when it doesn't feel like it.

When it looks like Jesus isn't king, but he promises he is, his promises are always true. Or as Jesus put it, **"Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."** (John 18:37)

The King is On His Throne

One day I was talking to a mentor of mine. He was having a bad day. He didn't tell me the details but, you know, he was looking down, deep sigh—it wasn't good. So I asked, "Hey, how are you doing?" He didn't just dismiss me with a, "Oh! I'm great!" And he didn't say, "Terrible!" Do you know what he said in the middle of his crazy day? He said, "Nate, the King is on his throne."

I don't know what he was dealing with that day, and I don't know what you are dealing with today. But one thing I know, even when it doesn't look like it, when you're living on nothing but a promise, Christ the King is on his throne.

Amen.