

**John 18:33-37: November 23-25, 2024**  
**Christ the King Sunday**

**John 18:33-37: Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”** <sup>34</sup> “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” <sup>35</sup> “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” <sup>36</sup> 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.” <sup>37</sup> “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.”

Dear fellow sons and daughter of the King,

As someone who has never had a great passion for technology it is somewhat surprising to me that I’ve become fascinated with Artificial Intelligence, better known as AI. AI taps into vast amounts of data and by using algorithms analyzes that data to offer the most likely answer. Since today is “Christ the King Sunday”, I asked AI: “What are the qualities of a good ruler?” Here were the top 5: 1. Integrity 2. Empathy 3. Wisdom 4. Humility 5. Vision.

How well your favorite US presidents of the last 30 years actually embody these characteristics would be a great topic of conversation...outside the walls of this church. What I find worth considering on Christ the King Sunday is this: a quality that didn’t make most of the lists is the quality of **patience**. Yet there is something known as the “patience of power” that is found in many good rulers. Patience of power is the ability of someone in authority to exercise restraint, maintain composure and approach challenges with a long-term perspective rather than making decisions impulsively. A classic example is how Franklin Roosevelt handled the timing of the US entering into World War II. By 1940 Roosevelt believed it was in America’s best interest to join the cause of the Allies, but waited until Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor when America was united in their support. , But no one in history has modeled the patience of power better than our Savior King. Our theme today:

**Behold your King!**

- 1. The patient King few people wanted**
- 2. The patient King all sinners need**

**The patient king few people wanted...**In the first verse of our text we’re told **Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”** That was the accusation that the chief priests and teachers of the law had leveled against Jesus. It wasn’t as though most of the Jews of Jesus day didn’t want a king. They knew the Messianic prophecy in Zechariah: “**Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**” They desperately wanted a king, and for some, Jesus had been their candidate of choice. After Jesus fed the 5000, the people wanted to force him to be king. A king who could produce food by just saying a word? A king who could cause the blind to see and the deaf to hear

and the lame to walk? A king that wouldn't just make empty campaign promises, but a king who could deliver on every promise? What's not to like?

Well, many decided that there was a lot not to like. Sure, Jesus fed thousands with just a little bit of food, but he seemed more interested in offering spiritual food than he did in filling kitchen cupboards. Jesus healed many, but he spent as much time preaching as he did healing. And Jesus' preaching? Love your enemies? Love those who hate you? Love your neighbor, and everybody is your neighbor? Pay taxes and give to Caesar what is Caesar's and don't call it theft? Give to the poor? Why can't they just get a job? Eat with those who are obvious sinners and social outcasts? What was Jesus thinking?

And then there were the two biggest issues that many had with Jesus: #1: Jesus' willingness to afflict the comfortable didn't make the comfortable very happy. Jesus calling out the hypocrisy and legalism of the Pharisees, Sadducees and teachers of the law was more than they could handle. After all, they looked in their own mirror and they only saw the best of the best. They had no time for the mirror of the law that Jesus regularly held in front of them.

The second issue: Many Jews felt the biggest threat they faced in life was that they were ruled by Rome. As they waited for the long-promised Messiah, they hoped that when this "Anointed One" –the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace appeared he would overthrow Rome and they would once again be free. When it became clear that this was not Jesus' mission or intention, their disappointment turned to hatred. No matter the power of his preaching, no matter the awe of his miracles, Jesus was not the king the Jews wanted. And so what did they want? They wanted Jesus' death, and this led them and Jesus to Pilate.

So back to Pilate's question: "**Are you the king of the Jews?**" Jesus' answer? "**Is that your own idea,**" Jesus asked, "**or did others talk to you about me?**" Do you see what Jesus does here? Just hours from his death, Jesus doesn't protest his innocence or fight for his release. He tries to engage Pilate in a conversation. For what purpose? The same purpose Jesus had at Jacob's well with the Samaritan woman, the same purpose he had when a paralytic was lowered through a roof, the same purpose when he had when he called Zacharias down from his perch in a tree. The king of kings came not to be served but to serve and to save. "Pilate, let's talk about what you know and what you think you might know and what you don't know."

Pilate's response? He rejects Jesus' invitation for a deeper conversation and dismisses any need for this supposed king: "**Am I a Jew? Your own people handed you over to me.**" If this was a modern-day courtroom this would be the same as a judge saying to a defendant: "You are out of order. Questions are for me to ask, not you." Pilate looked at Jesus and saw an innocent man, but he didn't see a king, and certainly didn't see a king that he believed he needed. Even though as a Roman governor Pilate would have had at least some sense of honor and judicial justice, Pilate had a greater sense of self-preservation. Instead of a death sentence, Pilate offered a Passover pardon and when that didn't work, Pilate tried to appease the angry mob with a brutal beating of

the man he had found innocent. But when both of those efforts failed, Pilate took the coward's way out and handed Jesus over to be crucified.

In the next chapter of John when Pilate presented Jesus to the crowd and said, **“Behold, your king!”** unknowingly and unwittingly, Pilate spoke the truth. While **Jesus wasn't the king the people wanted, he was the patient king all sinners need.**

In verse 36 of our text Jesus says, **“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.”**

**“My kingdom is not of this world.”** Jesus' kingdom was different, and Pilate didn't understand what Jesus meant. That is understandable. Jesus didn't look or act like any king Pilate had ever met. The Jewish leaders also rejected Jesus' explanation of what he meant. That was tragic. But Pilate and the Jewish leaders weren't the only ones who failed to appreciate the unique nature of Jesus' job description. Time after time Jesus' disciples—his very closest friends and allies—ignored Jesus' clear testimony about who he was and why he was on earth.

For 3 years of ministry and message after message and miracle after miracle Jesus had made it so very clear what sort of king he was, what sort of power he possessed. Power over the laws of nature: water into wine, so that a bride and groom wouldn't be humiliated at their wedding. Power over disease—not for fame and fortune, but to help those who were suffering. Power over legions of demons, not so that he could gloat, but so that those who had been possessed could be free from a tormented life. Power over wind and waves, not to baffle scientists, but to save those he loved from harm.

The goal of this King of Kings? Never to help himself. Always to help others. No arrogance, no ego, no self-promotion, no bragging about his latest and greatest accomplishments. No love of self. Always a very patient love for others. Yet in spite of the clearest lessons of all: a widow's son and a 12 year old girl and a man four days dead all restored to life; and then King Jesus' own empty tomb and death defeated, the disciples still failed to understand. On his very last day on earth just before he ascends to heaven the disciples ask, **“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”** Jesus' answer? No rebuke, no “are you kidding me”, no righteous indignation. Just a reminder and an encouragement: **“This isn't for you to know. But go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit.”**

Such comfort as we find in a King of kings that is so compassionate. And such comfort we find in a king who shows such unparalleled patience. Throughout his ministry Jesus was the epitome of patience. Patient with John the Baptist's disciples when they wondered who he was. Patient with the woman at Jacob's well, patient with Peter he when sunk below the surface of the Sea of Galilee, patient with that same Peter when he denied him 3 times, patient with the disciples when they argued about who was the greatest, patient with the thief on the cross.

And now, 2000 years later, Jesus is no less patient with us than he was with Peter, or the woman at the well, or the thief on the cross. Have you ever put Jesus on trial? Have you ever thought to yourself, “Jesus, I know you’re supposed to be my king, but sometimes I wonder if you really care about me.” “Jesus, if you do care about me, then why aren’t things in my life better?” “Well, Jesus, I know what you’ve promised, but Jesus, I’m not sure you can deliver. Where’s the proof?”

Where is the proof? In our text, Jesus tells Pilate: **“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.”** What is that truth? In the upper room on Maundy Thursday Jesus told his disciples, “I am going to prepare a place for you...in spite of your sins, in spite of your selfish pride and your doubts and denials.” And when they didn’t understand what he meant and asked, “But we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered ...answered patiently: **“I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”**

And unlike our patience, which wears thin, or runs out, or we lose...Jesus’ patience —just like his love and mercy and forgiveness—his patience never runs out. Jesus is always, and only concerned about you. As our patient Savior-King Jesus has one goal. That you stand next to him in heaven, the sweetest kingdom that has ever existed. That is not an item you have to check off your bucket list. Jesus will check it off for you. You ask, “Where is the proof?”

**Behold your king.** Only one king in history would wear a bloody crown of thorns so that you may wear a crown of life. That is your king. Rejoice in your king, and rejoice in that truth. Amen.