

The image which probably comes to our minds when we think of a king is of a person sitting on the throne. Having a crown on his head, and a scepter in his hand, it is the image of one holding great power. Not every name for a leader of a country brings to mind that same stately and powerful image, even if they have the same power over the country. One who is called a dictator may wield the same power, but probably has acquired that power by force, and can hold on to that power only as long as he can exert that same force over the people of that country. In our country, we have a president who governs our nation, but he does not rule as king or tyrant, but must work with the legislative branch of government. But no matter what form of government a nation has, it is truly a blessing to have one, powerful leader of a country, who is able to govern the nation well for the benefit of all its citizens. This morning, as we celebrate the last Sunday in our church year, the Sunday which we call Christ the King Sunday, we are reminded that we do have such a Ruler Who watches over us, protects us, and has defeated all of our enemies. That is no earthly ruler, but it is our Savior, Jesus Christ. JESUS TRULY IS OUR KING! 1) He is often mocked, but 2) He will rule forever.

The account from the Bible which is before us this morning may seem to be somewhat strange for Christ the King Sunday, since it comes from the account of Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate. As Jesus was being accused before Pilate, Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent of all the charges being brought against Him. He had been trying all different tactics to be able to set Jesus free. Now He allowed his soldiers to mock Jesus. They dressed Him in a scarlet robe and put a crown on His head, only it was a crown of thorns. They put a staff in His hand to represent a scepter. All of this was done to ridicule that charge that had been brought against Him, that He claimed to be a king.

Their mocking continued in very cruel ways: They knelt in front of him and mocked him. **“Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.** (29-30) The abuse was great, both mentally, but also physically. This was calculated on Pilate's part because he wanted to evoke a feeling of sympathy in the hearts of the people so that he would be able to let Jesus go. When he would have Jesus stand before the people, they would see for themselves that no king would allow such things to happen to him. So certainly Jesus was not a king that deserved to be put to death.

But Pilate miscalculated the hatred which the leaders of the people had for Jesus. They still demanded, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate did not consider Jesus to be an earthly king, and so was no threat to his earthly rule. The people did not consider Jesus to be a religious King, and wanted Him out of the way as a religious leader. Jesus seemed powerless to do anything to stop the things which were happening to Him, so everyone concluded that He was nothing more than a fraud that had to be gotten rid of.

Sad to say, that is still how many people look at Jesus to this day. He is often mocked for claiming to be the Messiah, thus rejecting all that He did for fallen mankind. They may admit that He really did exist, but that is about as far as they are willing to go. Many today, even so-called Christians, feel that Jesus was just the illegitimate son of Mary and a Roman soldier (just like Joseph also suspected at first.) They feel that it is foolish to think that Jesus was anything more than a great teacher who had some new ideas that are still good to follow even to this day. They feel that His power and influence is just in those ideas of love and forgiveness of others.

Certainly Jesus is rejected because few believe that He has the power to be able to do anything today. “You are in my thoughts and prayers” is just a platitude — they do not believe that Jesus has the power to change the situation. While scientists will tell you that those who believe in Jesus and pray to Him heal faster in the hospital, they attribute that to the mental attitude of the patient more than any outside influence helping them. Others will give lip service to Jesus, asking Him for His help in crisis — like a national day of prayer, but not really believing that He is able to do anything to help. In other words, they simply go through the motions to make themselves feel better.

Others reject Jesus through their neglect of Him. This is probably the category which you and I need to beware lest we also fall into. While we confess with our tongues that Jesus is the Almighty Ruler of all, do we really go to Him in the full confidence of faith and expect Him to help us with our daily struggles? Later this week, we will celebrate a day of Thanksgiving, and on that one day we will strive to recall blessings which Jesus has given to us throughout this past year. We will probably remember the general daily blessings which we treasure so much, but will we thank Him for all the things which happened to us this past year — both good and bad? Will we single out only those things which we truly loved and appreciated, and forget those unpleasant things which Jesus also allowed to come our way to train and teach us? Then what happens after Thanksgiving Day — will we begin to neglect Jesus again, and fail to go to Him day by day for each and everything which we face in life, both small and great? Or will we remember Him only when there is some big problem which we feel that we cannot handle on our own? Jesus wants us to remember that He is our King every day of our lives, and, in effect, we are also joining with those who mock Him as powerless if we neglect to come to Him with our daily struggles in this life, trusting that He is willing and able to help through every trial we may face.

But whether we remember to come before Him or not, Jesus truly is a king, and He will rule forever. After the soldiers had mocked Jesus, Pilate finally gave in to have Jesus crucified. It was through that shameful death that Jesus was able to atone for all of the sins of the whole world. Jesus gave His holy, precious blood into death so that He could defeat our greatest enemies — sin, death and hell. No, He was not an earthly king that would have armies to fight for Him. Instead, He fought the battle Himself, and won the victory for us all.

And that victory lasts forever, even as His kingdom lasts forever. When we pray the Lord's prayer, we ask that His kingdom come. He does bring His kingdom into our hearts as we look to Him in faith to rule our hearts and lives both now and forever. We allow Him to guide and direct us through this life, following His laws, rather than thinking we can go our own way.

And eventually He will bring us through this life into His heavenly kingdom, where we will enjoy His eternal rule without the evil effects of sin and Satan to disrupt them. That is the day to which we have been looking forward ever since we heard what Jesus has done for us. When we enter that heavenly kingdom, it will be plainly evident to all that Jesus is our King, and that His loving hand guides and directs all things for our good. It is happening just that way now, but we do not see it clearly, and His perfect rule is being obstructed by sin and death here on earth.

As we conclude the Lord's prayer with the doxology, we state that we know that our prayer is heard and answered because the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to Him. Jesus has the authority to rule all things even now because He is sitting on the right of the Father, so it is right and proper that we should listen to Him. He has the power to be able to back up any of the promises which He makes to us. And then we give Him all praise and glory for all of these things that come from His loving hands.

So on this Christ the King Sunday, let us realize that Jesus is not like any earthly ruler who rules only by the will of the people. Rather, as the almighty Son of God Who came to this earth to be our Savior, He watches over us, blessing us with His spiritual blessings day by day, as well as bringing us earthly blessings. Jesus truly is our King, and cares and watches over us every day.