

Christ the King

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace. May I speak in the name of the God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

It's tense, this encounter between Pilate and Jesus. Worlds and Powers collide and it's not going to end pretty. It will end in the lynching of Jesus on a cross.

This encounter is highly explosive from a political standpoint. Pilate is the most senior representative of the Roman Empire in this part of the world. Jesus is a local, a Jewish man. The Roman Empire has conquered Judea long ago. They occupy this land mercilessly, yes there is the Pax Romana, which guarantees certain limited freedoms to the people living under occupation, but it is freedom that comes with heavy taxation and merciless brutality for anyone who crosses the occupying powers.

The Jewish people are not that easily satisfied, they keep hoping for liberation, for freedom from this foreign occupying power. That's why again and again rebellions break out in Judea. And again and again the Romans put them down with increasing brutality and death counts. At this point it's kind of a well-known cycle. Some Jewish man declares himself through words and actions as the Messiah, gathers people and starts one way or another to rebel against the Roman occupying forces. The Romans will not stand for it and the Roman army crushes the rebellion, killing anyone connected with it.

Jesus is likely the newest version of this vicious cycle. Pilate is not new to this game. But something is off. Jesus is not playing by the rules which Pilate knows so well.

My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.

That's weirdly true. Jesus' followers have not fought for him. Well, one tried, cutting off the ear of an opponent, but Jesus told him off and apparently healed the ear. Jesus has not resisted, and he's made sure his followers didn't either. What is going on here?

My kingdom is not from this world.

Something about Jesus is different. The way Jesus speaks and acts does not fit within the world as Pilate knows it. It's disconcerting, unsettling. Like I said, this is a tense encounter. Powers and worlds collide, beyond what Pilate can fully grasp.

Jesus Christ is a King. But completely different from any concepts of kings we have on this Earth. Jesus is not the King of one people or another or one nation or another. Jesus does not fight for one people and against another people. Jesus does not fight for one nation and against another nation. Jesus is a different kind of king, because his kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, as we know it. Jesus' kingdom is different. Because this is the Kingdom of God we are talking about. Because Jesus is

not just a Jewish man who lived and died 2000 years ago. Because Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus is God. The God who created heaven and earth and all that dwells within it. The God who created all human beings, and loves them all, all human beings from all peoples and nations.

That is why Jesus is a different kind of king. Because his Kingdom is all of God's creation, in all its beauty and glory, in its vulnerability and brokenness, in all its diversity and complexity. Jesus is a different kind of king. In ways that Pilate cannot understand, Jesus is King of kings, King even of the Roman emperor. King even over the Romans, who oppressed him as a Jewish man, King even over the crowds who shouted for him to be crucified.

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Jesus does not allow his followers to fight for him, because Jesus is a different kind of king, because his Kingdom is God's Kingdom, to which all of God's beloved creation belongs. Because both, his followers and his enemies, are beloved and cared for by him. Jesus will make sure that justice will be done and that all injustice will be rightly dealt with, but Jesus will make sure to not cause further injustices himself. He does not want to be the cause for more hurt and brokenness. Instead, Jesus fights the real enemy, the cause of all hurt and brokenness, of destruction and death. Jesus fights alone on the cross, for all of creation, to the

point of death and into the grave. And Jesus won the victory on behalf of all God's creation, as he was raised to new life on Easter morning.

Jesus is a very different kind of king. What does it mean to serve this King of kings? If we want to follow Christ the King, we are challenged to no longer belong to simply one kind of people, or to one nation or another, one political party or another. Serving Christ the King means to know that all human beings, all of creation is beloved and cared for by our King.

And of course we were born belonging to different families, peoples and nations, but Christ the King invites us into the one family of God, the one people of God in God's Kingdom. And yes of course, that doesn't mean we are suddenly all the same, look the same, think the same and so on. God made creation full of diversity and complexity. Knowing what kind of different king Christ the King is, doesn't suddenly have us all magically agree on everything, or think the same on all issues. Differences and disagreements will continue to be a part of our lives.

But Christ the King challenges us to keep in mind, that even people we disagree with, even people we find painfully difficult, people we might even consider our enemies, are just as much beloved and cared for by God as we are ourselves. We are all equally precious and cherished by God. Christ the King loves and cares for us all. How might that change the way we think and speak about, how we act towards people we disagree with, whom find difficult or even consider our enemies?
Amen.