

What Does it Mean to Make Jesus My King?

B-Last Sun. Pentecost; Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; John 18:33-37

Robert Woody, 11/25/18

Sermon-in-a-Sentence: We need a king of all Creation to break down the walls and barriers that divide and segregate us, and to call upon our trust, loyalty and commitment for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Children's Sermon:

There are many “metaphors” or “pictures” of Jesus in the Bible, to try to help us understand “who Jesus is” and what our “relationship” should be with him. The metaphor used in our Bible readings and prayers today to describe Jesus is “**King.**” What’s a king? A leader, a protector. How is Jesus like a king? How does this metaphor or picture of Jesus as “king” help us understand who he **really is**? Our Leader.

What if we divided our world up into many different kingdoms with different kings? What if you two had one King, and you two had a different one, and then you two had another? Three different kings? Some of you following one king, others following a different king? What would probably happen? We would probably have lots of arguments and disagreements and fights, all the time. We would probably have to put up fences and walls to separate our different kingdoms.

But what if all of us had the same king? What if we are all committed and following the same leader? Then maybe we could begin to agree on things, and work out our differences and work together for a peaceful world. Maybe we would be able to tear down the fences that separate us, and work together for the same “Kingdom.”

That’s a least part of what I think it means when we say Christ is our “King,” and everyone’s “King.” If we all have the same king, then we can all be part of one big family, working together because we would be loyal to and follow the same leader. We may not all be alike. We may have many differences or disagreements, but we do have the same King.

Our King is Jesus, and we are all trying to follow the Jesus Way – everybody who is here, everyone who is a part of Reconciliation, everyone who is a follower of Jesus is on your team.

Does everyone always agree on everything in your family? Nope, that’s normal. As a church family, we don’t always agree on everything, or see things the same way, or read and interpret the Bible exactly the same. But we have to remember, we do have the **same leader**, the same King. We are all trying to follow Jesus. And because we are on the same team, we should treat each other as friends and teammates, even when we disagree. We should try to **reconcile** our differences, make peace, work together. That’s why we call ourselves Church of Reconciliation. What does reconciliation mean? It means making peace, overcoming differences.

Is Jesus your King? Will you treat everyone else who sees Jesus as their king as part of your team, your family? Will you try to live in peace with each other? Great! You are headed in the right direction. Amen.

Adult Sermon:

This week is the finale week, the climax of our liturgical year. What does it mean for me, or for you to proclaim Christ as “my King”? “Our King”?

The metaphor of Christ as our King, comes from the culture and political traditions and history of ancient Israel, and the world that surrounded them. David became the iconic King of the Hebrew tradition. He was not perfect. But he did help unite the people of Israel and bring them together under the authority of Yahweh, their God.

Centuries later, when the Hebrew prophets imagined the culmination of what God was trying to do through the people of Israel, they saw the world through the lens of King David’s reign. They imagined a future “King,” a descendent of David, who would be sent by God to have “dominion” and “kingship” over, not just Israel, but all peoples, all the world, all creation, king of everybody. We heard an example of that in our reading from the Book of Daniel.

But in the unfolding history of Israel and in Jesus’ day, kingships were not doing so well. There was much more **abuse of power** and domination than **peace** and **unity**, or concern for the widows and orphans. That is probably one reason why Jesus was so **uncomfortable** with the title, “King.” He didn’t want to be associated with the model of “King” present in his day.

Jesus never claims or accepts the title as “king,” at least not directly. Jesus constantly talks about the “Kingdom of God” or the “Kingdom of Heaven,” but he never says, “I am or want to be a king, or the king, or your king.”

Earlier in the Gospel of John, after the feeding of the 5,000, the people were so impressed, they wanted to make Jesus their “king,” probably so he could free them from Roman oppression. The story concludes: “When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to **make him king**, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” [John 6:15.]

In our Gospel reading this morning, twice Jesus is asked by Pilate if he is a king. “Are you king of the Jews?” It’s a simple “yes or no” question. But as he often does in John’s Gospel, Jesus does not answer the question; instead he responds with his own question. Then he says, “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. But as it is, **my kingdom** is not from here.” But because Jesus speaks of “my Kingdom,” Pilate asks again, “So you are a king? Another “yes or no” question. And again, Jesus refuses to claim the title.

“You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

What does this mean? Perhaps, when he says “everyone who belongs to the truth,” he’s referring to those who belong to or are committed to and pursuing what Jesus calls the “**Kingdom of God**,” which had been the focus of Jesus’ ministry. And if they “belong to” and are committed to pursuing the “Kingdom of God,” that means they are truly **listening** to Jesus’ voice and **following his Way**.

The Jesus we see in Scripture just doesn’t sound like a traditional king. He is much more comfortable with the title of “servant,” which is almost opposite of “king.” When the disciples got riled up because James and John had asked to sit at Jesus’ right and left in his coming “kingdom,” Jesus responds by condemning kings and other tyrants. “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your **servant**, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but **to serve**, and to give his life a ransom for many.” [Mark 10:42-45]

Jesus sees his model and example as a faithful **servant**, as the way to bring about a life-giving “kingdom”, God’s Kingdom, a world of justice and peace, where all people are treated with dignity, the widows, the orphans, the refugees; where the needy neighbors are helped. Where no one has dominion over others, where a culture of domination by the rich and powerful is not acceptable. The Kingdom of God is a place where everyone has a role and a purpose in life.

We, as unique arms, hands, eyes, toes, come together and collaborate. We share a common purpose as the Body of Christ. God’s **presence** and **Love** is the central binding force for this Kingdom.

So if, when we point to Jesus as our King, we are affirming our own commitment to follow Jesus in the pursuit and building of the “Kingdom of God,” then yes, proclaiming “Christ as King,” makes total sense. And if the Kingdom of God spreads throughout the world, all Creation, and throughout time and eternity, then there will be no barriers, no walls, no boundaries, no “us vs. them.” Obviously, we are not there yet.

But, if we call Jesus our “King,” in the hopes that he will someday **return**, and **seize power**, and **confront** the nations and peoples who are not “Christian,” and force them to submit or go to hell, then I think we are misusing and abusing the metaphor of “King.” I do not think making Christ My King is about elevating Jesus to a throne and declaring my loyalty to Christ **through my opposition** to all other faith traditions.

But I must confess, the metaphor of Christ as Our King, does become really challenging when we think about it in the context of other faith traditions. If Christ is our King, who is Mohammed? Or Buddha? Are they **opposing Kings**, ruling separate Kingdoms which are in conflict with the Kingdom Christ proclaims? And therefore, their followers need to be converted or condemned? Ultimately will only Christians, those who literally name Christ as their King, see the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven? Will the God of Love **condemn** everyone else, everyone who happened to be born into and raised in a different faith tradition, and who we have failed to convert to Christianity. Will they all be **condemned** to hell? Even if they love their neighbors, help the needy, respect God's Creation?

In our Gospel reading, when Jesus, rather than claiming the title of King, says, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice," could it be that the truth we hear through Jesus' voice in our Christian tradition is the same truth that is heard in the voices of other faith traditions? Can the same truth we as Christians hear from the voice of Jesus, be heard in voices of other religious leaders? Can we hear and speak the same truth about God and the world with a different language, different metaphors, different characters? Can we share and live together in the "Kingdom of God" with faithful, peaceful Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and people of other religious traditions, who are also worshipping and seeking God, the God, our God, through their own tradition?

Could that be why the command **to love our neighbor** is **central** to all major religious traditions?

Christ is my King. He points me and leads me in a direction towards the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of not just **my** God, but the God, the **God of Love**, the **God of all Creation**.

Yes, there are Christians who condemn Muslims and Jews. And there are Muslims and Jews who condemn Christians. But aren't we all worshipping the same Creator God? Does our God of Love condemn those who happen to be born in a different part of the world and grew up in a different culture? Can't we all work together to pursue the same Kingdom of God? A world where all are accepted, and all are loved. Can't we all love and support those who are suffering?

Christ is our King because he leads us to the Kingdom of God, the Way of Love. According to Jesus, The most important thing is to: **Love God**, and **Love Our Neighbors**.

May God's Kingdom of Love come. May God's will, working through all of us, be done, here on Earth, now and for Eternity.

Amen