



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 9, 2014
Midweek Lenten Worship
Sermon Text: [John 18:36-37](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Our King is Crucified!

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Jesus was before Pilate. You are probably a little familiar with Pilate. He was the governor over that province of the Roman empire. He was a guy who had been given a position of authority, and whatever power came with it, over that province. But he was also a guy under power. He was a guy who had to answer to the king of the world at that time, the head of the Roman empire, Caesar. Caesar had appointed him to be the head of this province, but he knew what it was like to be on the bad side of Caesar. Putting down a previous rebellion, he had gotten himself in a little hot water with the king that was over him. So the idea of kings, power and having it and being under it was something that Pilate would have been very, very familiar with.

When the Jews come and they say, "Hey, this guy claims to be a king and we have no king but Caesar," Pilate asks them a bunch of questions. He determines that it's just a bunch of lies. Jesus wasn't claiming to be an earthly king. Pilate might not have known exactly what Jesus was claiming to be, but he knew he wasn't claiming to be a threat to Caesar. He wanted to let him go, but he couldn't because he had to be concerned about answering to the king that was over him.

All this talk about kings really leads us to look again at what Jesus went through. You have to think that Pilate, at the very least, was really surprised to see this guy that was standing in front of him say "Yes" when he asked "Are you a king?" "Yeah, I'm a king, but my kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my followers would come and they wouldn't let me be arrested. But my kingdom is not of this world. My kingdom is all about truth." That had to surprise Pilate. It had to surprise him and it either made him think, or it made him think that Jesus was a lunatic, but he knew Jesus was no threat.

Still, as he listens to the Jews milling about outside of his judgment hall shouting over and over "Crucify him! Crucify him!", he is worried about the king that is over him because they whisper "If you let this guy go, you're no friend of Caesar." He hands an innocent man over to his death.

That idea of Jesus as a king, the king of the Jews, had to stick in his head because he had that sign written in all those different languages. "This is the king of the Jews," so that everybody that walked by Golgotha that day would know this was the charge which this guy was being crucified for. I suppose in Pilate's mind, it was his rib at the Jewish leaders, trying to poke them one last time. But I suppose it also served a secondary

purpose for him... it let everyone know, don't mess with Rome. This is what happens if you mess with Rome and claim to be a king. You end up not looking real kingly, right?

Anybody walking by and seeing the sign "This is the king of the Jews" had to think it was pretty much mockery. The bloody, bruised body, dried spittle all over himself, blood running down his face, his back, his arms, wherever the whips had hit him. He didn't look like much of a king. "Yes, I am a king" had to sound pretty surprising to Pilate.

Anyone that looks at Jesus without the eyes of faith thinks he's just a common criminal that was killed like a lot of other common criminals. This guy with delusions of grandeur, the Son of God, the King of the Jews, take your pick, it just all seemed nuts as you see him on the cross. He's not leading an army into battle. He's hanging on a cross. He's not receiving royal visitors. He's hanging on a cross. But when you and I look at Jesus' cross with the eyes of faith, I certainly pray we see something different. I would hope we do see a battlefield.

Our King isn't lining up chariots. He isn't worrying about outflanking his enemy. He isn't worrying about holding anything in reserve so he can charge against the enemy. Our King is meeting the enemy head on himself on the battlefield that is the cross.

He had already lived absolutely perfectly so that they couldn't even get the people to lie about what he had done wrong that was worthy of death. He was perfect because your God demands of you and me and every other human being that we be perfect. And we can't do it. So he was perfect in our place. God demands that the wages of sin is death. So Jesus took our place and endured the agony of hell on the cross, not just the physical aspect of that death, but having to cry out "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" To be that alone... he was alone on that battlefield. God forsook God because he loved you.

He conquered and established his kingdom on that battlefield by paying for the sins of the entire world, by opening the gates to heaven to all to whom he gives that gift of faith. Their sins have been forgiven. He paid for the sins of the whole world. He comes to us personally through faith. That's how he conquered. When you and I look at the cross, that's what we see. A King who conquers for us by dying for us. When we keep that in our vision, in some part of our vision through every day of our life, it's going to make a difference.

I told you earlier that Pilate seemed to always have one eye on Caesar. He seemed to administer his whole government in that province kind of through the prism of, how is Caesar going to react to this? Is this going to get me in hot water? Or is this going to be pleasing to Caesar? That seems to be what he filtered everything through because when they said "Hey, if you let him go, you're no friend of Caesar" he said "Okay, crucify him." It looks like that's how he ran things, right?

There's probably something you and I can learn from Pilate. Not to focus on Caesar, but to focus on our King. Everyone on the side of truth listens to him. Everyone on the side of truth listens to the truth that Jesus came to proclaim. That's what Jesus told Pilate and that's what he was telling us.

Here's the truth... he established his kingdom on the cross. Now when we look at the cross, we should be reminded he is actively ruling this kingdom, this kingdom that stretches into eternity. Caesar and Pilate are long gone. Everyone else that has come to power since then has left power. All these different kings and their powers have come and gone. They've been up and down and all over, but God's kingdom is eternal. What that means is that your eternal King has told you that now he sits at the right hand of God and he rules over everything for the benefit of the church, those people that believe in him and love him. That's the truth that Jesus has proclaimed to you.

The question becomes, do we listen to that truth? Or do we think of Jesus only as our King when we are sitting here in church, or maybe when we're reading our Meditations book or our Bible at home? Do we realize that he is the King that is ruling over everything for our good when we go off to the work place? When we go out for dinner with a spouse? When we take our children out to the park to play? Whatever we do, he is still the King that is ruling all things. Do we look at everything we do as if he is intimately involved with it and concerned about what we are doing?

Or do we just want him in his corner and we want the rest for ourselves? Or do we only want him to get out of his corner and come to our side when difficulty comes into our life? When we start to find the stress and the strain that comes from living in a world that is no longer perfect, then do we wonder God, where are you? I thought you were supposed to be ruling over everything for my good? This doesn't feel good. Where are you? Do you find yourself ever doing that? I think we do at times, don't we?

It happens when we take our eyes off of the fact that our King loves us and he loved us enough to die for us, and he has promised the truth that he is ruling everything, and we think we have to face things on our own, or we think we are facing things on our own. His love is there for us everyday of our lives. He longs to wrap his arms around us and assure us that he loves us and he is with us and he'll sustain us in the faith until he calls us to our heavenly home. That's the truth and that's the people on the side of the truth that we want to listen to. We don't always do it. When we don't, don't make excuses. Just say, "Lord, I have sinned. Forgive me." And then see in the cross again that battlefield where your King conquered that sin for you. Then get back in the fray. Live for God. Seek to serve him. And when you stumble and fall, say "Lord, forgive me," and get up again and serve him because he continually washes away every last one of those sins.

If Pilate was smart enough to look at everything through the prism of Caesar, you and I, who love Christ, don't you think we are a little bit brighter and have a little bit of a head start on him so that we can look at everything through the prism of Jesus and the victory he won for us? Amen.