

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 450, 11-21-2021 † Christ the King

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

JOHN 18

³³Pilate went back into the Praetorium and summoned Jesus. He asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

³⁴Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you about me?”

³⁵Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”

³⁶Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.”

³⁷“You are a king then?” Pilate asked.

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



Do you know who is the oldest person to travel to space? William Shatner made it out of this world at 90 years old about a month ago, after he clicked on his Amazon account to deliver him to space. Ten minutes and 65 miles above the ground, how fitting it was for a man who built his career on space travel ... to finally make it out of this world!

With more private space travelers these days, who has jurisdiction? Who is in charge of crimes committed in space? What government is in charge of things out of this world? According to a 1967 inter-governmental agreement, whoever is responsible for sending the violating spacecraft is in charge of punishing the crime. On the international space station, each module is governed by a different country, so that answers that problem. For spacecraft that are out of this world, it depends on where they came from in this world.

What about crimes committed against someone who is not of this world? What if that someone-not-of-this world is a king? What kind of jurisdiction in this world does that king have? Such are the questions when worlds collide in our gospel today.

THE PECULIAR RULING ACTIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST THE KING

1. He rules in hearts

Pontius Pilate was confused. He was the governor over the Jewish people at the time, and they really wanted this Jesus of Nazareth dead. As the trial progressed, new evidence seemed to be entered into the court all the time. This Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be king. There are nearly as many famous works of art of Pontius Pilate standing in judgment of Jesus as there are of Jesus on the cross. Why is it so popular for artists to paint either a conversation between the two or a gesture from Pilate to Jesus before the crowd?

Here is a convergence of two worlds. In the one world, the fate of Jesus of Nazareth was in the hands of the Roman governor. The power seemed to be in Pilate's hands. He held position. He was visibly in charge. This Jesus did not give the impression of a king. He didn't look so royal, so regal or majestic. Our Lord's body was beaten and bound. His wounds were fresh and His crown was torture.

But if there is deeper truth and Jesus does reign from outside of the *cosmos*—the known world—the real power was with King Jesus. *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* Not of this world. If you can believe Jesus of Nazareth, His *“servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews.”* He had His own host of armies, fighting angels who would attack and destroy wherever He might point His finger.

Who has jurisdiction? You can almost imagine the FBI coming in to take over the case from the local sheriff's office. “I'm in charge here.” “Not anymore, you're not! This case now belongs to the FBI.” “Not anymore, you're not! This case belongs to the ATF!”

The jurisdiction that matters is from a different place. It comes from God Himself in heaven. The psalmist sings, “*Our God is in heaven, He does whatever pleases Him.*” But now the Son of God was no longer in heaven. Does He cease doing what pleases Him? Or is this the exact position, obedient to rulers of this realm, subject to the punishments of this kingdom, the exact position in which He wants Himself?

Jesus Christ the King rules from a position of grace and love. And with this King Jesus, grace and love are positioned for activity—activity in the hearts of believers. His is a kingdom of hearts. His subjects may be living in this world, subject to earthly kings and governments, to pledge allegiance to them, fight for them, die for them. But, at the same time, these subjects are born from above, and they are subject to the rule of Christ the King in their hearts. His rule is not limited to a certain territory comprising so and so many square miles. But His rule is not from this world. It is peculiar. It is from above. And it is by grace.

What rules you here? Is it grace and peace, or is it sin and guilt? What reigns in you? Is it King Jesus or a false god? What do you consider regal? Silver and gold, or His holy Word? Friends, your heart is a place for King Jesus, for there He has placed great promises. Do not think the realms of earth overrule the kingdom of God. For it gets better. This King comes to us to gather His wandering sheep. To get to His kingdom of glory, we must be a part of His kingdom of grace. This means holy God must come to sinners, for it is impossible the other way around. He has taken away the imaginary rule of all things temporal and earthly, and He now holds court in your believing heart. How peculiar!

2. He rules in truth

Add to that how interested Pilate has become to seek the cause of this mystery. Why do the Jews so badly want an innocent man dead? Pilate was investigating. He wanted to know the mystery, if Jesus was a king, and what Jesus might possibly have done wrong. So Jesus held all the cards. At this point, Pilate wanted the truth.

Are we so different from Pilate? Haven't you asked the same questions? Is Jesus really in charge? Is it possible King Jesus never sinned, let alone did something worthy of death? And isn't this the perfect mission opportunity if someone asked you these questions? You realize by the end of this that Jesus

is making an appeal to Pilate, inviting Pilate himself to discover the deeper, more beautiful truth.

Sadly, when Pilate says, "What is truth?" he is actually closing his ears to the voice of King Jesus.

Jesus declares Himself the witness to truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to the truth. In fact, earlier in John, sandwiched between Way and Life, we are told that Jesus is the Truth. All truth is meant to lead to Jesus. Anyone who is looking for truth in the abstract will find it to be concrete in Jesus. Whatever He says or does is truth.

If you too seek truth, look no further than the King. Christ's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives His Holy Spirit so that we believe His Holy Word and lead a humble, faithful, and godly life here on earth and hereafter in eternity. He now rules in the only place where truth resides, the hearts of believers. This truth cannot be taken. It cannot be moved. It is within you. By faith, you have the peace of a King who resides in you.

You have grown in this truth the last church year. Jesus was coming with it outside of this world at Advent. He was born for it at Christmas. He was manifest as truth by the Father in Epiphany. He suffered for truth at Lent. He rose with victorious truth at Easter. He was truly coequal and coeternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit at Trinity. We have grown in His truth through Pentecost. We have come back to the truth outside this world at End Times. The Greek word for "truth" is that which does not escape notice. It is inescapable. The Lord has truly met you with His riches and gifts throughout each season. He will not cease His rule in your heart until, by faith, you see His rule in heaven.

There are loopholes and serious questions about jurisdiction in outerspace; for instance, if an American murders a Russian in a Japanese spacecraft, no one really knows what to do. Who has jurisdiction on the moon colony or Mars? I guess we can cross that bridge when we come to it. Here on earth, King Jesus is truly in control. For earth has convicted Him and murdered Him, but it still could not hold Him. Not danger or famine or sickness or sword, for King Jesus spoke again! In His voice we have learned that we are part of His jurisdiction—no danger or famine or sickness or sword can keep us from Him or His heaven. What a change! We have a King and we are not of this world. Amen.