CHRIST THE KING

Revelation 1:1-8; Psalm 132; John 18:33-37

Every year, at the end of the church year, we observe a tradition that is 2000 years old. We name Jesus, here in our worship together, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. We hold Him up as the one anointed by God, to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews, the one chosen by the ancient of days to be the deliverer and the Saviour of the world. Jesus the King is an interesting and an important title in our tradition about Jesus, a title that bears looking at.

In Jesus' day, a king was the most powerful human being on earth. A king spoke, common people trembled. For nations, the king was the only means of securing order and peace. He was to be honored and respected and served. He was to be revered and feared and obeyed. A king was everything and everybody rolled up into one. He was of upmost importance, so much so that time itself was calculated on the basis of when the King began his reign.

Every year as we celebrate this Feast, we wonder what it means for us to name Jesus as King, especially when we consider what we have done, in our day and age, to sources of authority. There is no respect, there is no honor, there is no reverence in us, for those who rule over us in the political world. We regard no-one as better than us. We have reduced our royalty to the status of soap opera stars; we, almost universally, regard our politicians as corrupt and uncaring and out of touch; our judges and our

police we condemn as ineffective; and the laws that they make and enforce, when they are applied to us, we often call them unfair and we seek to get around them.

The image of Jesus as King, is hard to get our minds around, and once we do, it is an image that is hard to take seriously. It is, for most of us, a fantasy image, an image that belongs to stories that begin with the words "Once upon a time, in a land far far away"...

So just what does it mean to call Jesus King? In our Gospel Reading for today, Pontius Pilate clearly wondered about this. Pilate, who served the most powerful king in the world, knew what a king was. He knew about the power that a King has, the authority that he wields, the absolute obedience that he demands, and the power that he has to compel that obedience, should it not be volunteered. Pilate was a creature of his time, one who knew and accepted the rules, one who in fact was charged with making and enforcing the rules, and while he, like people today, sought to use those rules to his advantage, he knew what the consequences of ignoring or scoffing at the rules were.

One of the rules that Pilate was called to enforce was the rule that anyone who claimed to be a king, anyone who dared to set themselves up as an authority over and against the lawful authority of Caesar, was to be executed. It was a rule that Pilate had no scruples about enforcing, it was a rule that he had enforced thousands of times throughout Galilee. And so, when Jesus is brought before Pilate, the charge that is laid against him is that he unlawfully claims to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

The very idea that the bruised and suffering man that stood before him could be taken for a king, must have seemed

ridiculous to Pilate. Nevertheless Pilate does his duty. He asks Jesus if the charge against Him is true. He asks Jesus if He is, or if He claims to be, King of the Jews. Jesus answers Pilate that He is a king, but that His kingdom is not of this world, and adds: "If My kingdom were from this world, My followers would be fighting to keep Me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities".   Pilate understands this, he knows what a King is, and after checking Jesus once more by asking him "So you are a king?" and hearing Jesus respond with some mumbo-jumbo that He was born to testify to the truth, he tells Jesus' accusers that he finds there is no case against Him. Pilate cannot image Jesus as a King, the image that he has of a King, like the image that many of us have, just doesn't fit Jesus. And so, while in the end, Pilate allows Jesus to be crucified with the word's "King of the Jews" posted over His head in three different languages, Pilate himself does not believe what he has caused to be written.

Is this the same situation for us today? Do we, like Pilate, name Jesus as King, but for one reason or another just don't believe it, or take it seriously, or even understand what it means. We take a lot of things about Jesus rather lightly after all. We often name the name of Christ and either do not accept, or comprehend, or believe what we are saying. For example: a recent Gallop Poll revealed that more than eighty-six percent of all North Americans considered themselves Christian, but less than half knew who preached the Sermon on The Mount. The same Poll showed that sixty percent of the country was in Church last Easter, but one quarter of them did not know what the Easter celebration was all about.

So when we, here in the church today, name Jesus as King, when we call him Lord, do we know what we are doing? Do we accept it and believe it? And if we accept it, and believe it, do

we understand it?

What exactly does it mean for us to name Jesus King? Well, Jesus is not a worldly king. His power is not from this world, nor is it meant to be exercised in the way that the world exercises power. Jesus exercised His power by serving others, by forgiving others, by healing others, by giving to others, by sacrificing Himself for others. His power is the power of truth, the power of faith, the power of hope, the power of love, the power of life itself. It is real, it is present, and it makes demands upon us.

Jesus calls us to obedience, to faith, and to love, here and now. But Jesus does not force or compel us. He calls us to allow God to enter into our lives, and to rule our lives. He invites us to walk by the light He Himself has shed. And He shows us, in His own person, and in the lives of those who follow Him, that when we turn to Him, that there is healing and wholeness to be found. It is this King that we should seek to follow because in Him is abundant life.

AMEN.