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Peace, Sun Prairie  
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End Time 4 - Christ the King

Matthew 27:27-31  
WHAT SORT OF KING IS THIS?

This Gospel Lesson is tailored especially for any of us who are grieving, any of us who are hurting, struggling, any of us who are desperate, losing hope or just having a tough time. It is Christ the King Sunday, the final Sunday of the Christian Year. You might say today is the culmination of everything that is proclaimed about Christ throughout the year. It would be altogether appropriate if on this day we heard brass and tympani drums, if we observed it with processional and choir and decorations bedazzling our eyes -if we celebrated today as big as Christmas or Easter. Today is a grand day. Christ the King! Imagine how it will be on the Last Day when Christ returns on the clouds of heaven with all His angels, when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, when we will join voices with all the saints and angels to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord

God of hosts! Heaven and earth are full of your glory!”  
Our hero! Our Champion! The victor and ruler over all!

But then it is unsettling, even troubling, to hear today’s Gospel Lesson. We hear these words from Matthew 27 and we wonder, “Where’s the King? Where’s the Champion? What sort of hero is this?” He seems to capitulate in every way. He caves. He gives in. He surrenders. Isn’t He going to fight back? Please listen again to this snapshot of Christ’s passion: *Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.*

Perhaps as a believer you feel some level of discomfort with that reading for any number of reasons. But let me suggest one: do you get the implication... if the leader isn’t going to defend himself, what about those who follow him?

We would expect a boyfriend to stick up for his girlfriend. We would expect a dad to come to the defense of his family. We would expect a president to stick up for his country and not permit anyone to denigrate it, or a governor to praise his state and not fall silent if someone makes fun of it. But if the leader submits, he leaves those with him vulnerable. They fall with him.

Jesus submits silently, meekly, humbly and permits Pilate and his soldiers free license to abuse and then execute Him. If that's our King, if He's not going to stick up for Himself, then what of us?

This is a dilemma for us believers. Christ is our King yet in the same way that He seemed to surrender Himself to the abusive powers of hell, it feels like He surrenders us to the destructive effects of sin and the malicious attacks of the world and the devil.

And so we suffer. We suffer things that blow a hole in our heart. We suffer things that dismantle our lives. We suffer things that cause us great anxiety and strain. Perhaps we suffer some things that bring on a lifetime of anguish without resolution. We suffer things that

inflict extreme physical pain. And the spiritual struggle that accompanies all of this is when it feels like no one is coming to our defense, no one is lending us a hand up, no one is standing between us and our attackers.

Didn't Jesus say, *A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.* In other words, if Christ suffered, so will we who follow Him. But the same Jesus also said, *In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world.*

You see, the awesome little secret is that even as Pilate and his soldiers, even as everyone in the world who hated Him, even as the devil and hordes of twisted demons, even as death itself were all doing their worst to destroy Jesus Christ, even as it looked like He was capitulating and being defeated, He was, right there and then, defeating *them*. The Christ, the Son of God is the almighty, infinite King who fills the universe. In fact, He is outside and above this universe. All the galaxies, all the stars and planets, the sun and moon and the earth are like a piece of dust on the tip of His finger. Imagine our Lord Jesus as like a vacuum cleaner, taking in every ounce of suffering, hatred -all the worst that satan and

this world could spew out on Him. Like a vacuum cleaner He took into Himself the guilt and the full punishment for all sin in this entire world. He even took into Himself death. Though it looked like death swallowed Him up as He hung on the cross, the Bible says He swallowed up death.

Like a vacuum, He, the eternal, infinite God Almighty could take it all into Himself and absorb it and none of it, not the worst that hell could dish out was able to diminish His power, His glory, or His life one centimeter. For on the third day after His death He rose again in glory. Forty days later He ascended to the right hand of God with all power and authority. Everything that belonged to Him before He came to earth, belonged to Him still. The only difference is that He suffered through it all as a human and now stands victorious over it all also as a human. In this way, whatever He has accomplished and succeeded in doing as a human He shares with you and me. His victory is yours. His glory is yours. His power and authority are for you.

And now, dear Christian, even as you suffer, even as you are having a tough time, you are, right now, defeating all the things that feel like they are making mincemeat out of you. You are defeating every mess,

every heavy burden, every pang of guilt, every intense desire, every gut-twisting anxiety. You are defeating them, not by your own stamina or strength, not by your own resourcefulness or resilience, not by your own persistence or success. You are defeating them all simply and only through faith in Jesus. Though you are the weakest of the weak, as you trust in Jesus, His forgiveness, His victory, His power, His glory, His authority -all belong to you.

Sin, guilt, sorrow, messes, pain and sickness, death, the anger and immorality of this world and the multitude of ways it has done damage to your life, satan, hell and all devils -all of them are gutted of their power and hold over you. They are all like ocean waves crashing harmlessly against a brick wall as you take refuge in your Mighty Fortress Jesus. None of it affects your status as God's loved child, His loving care for you and your place in heaven because the King of kings has defeated them all for you.

Indeed, He even forces them all to serve a purpose opposite what they intend. By His promise all things must serve your spiritual and eternal good. The ugliest forces of satan and this world can roar out their rage to wreak havoc on you but they are only succeeding in

bringing about a happier and more glorious resurrection for you on the Last Day. Your body may be wasting away by old age or disease but He says, “Not a hair of your head will perish.” The greatest trick is played on sin, death, hell, satan and on all who hate us as we simply trust in Jesus.

On the Last Day when Jesus returns, what is ours right now only through faith, will become ours visibly and by experience. What we only believed about Him while we were here in this life we will look at and realize with every fiber of our being -that He is indeed Christ the King. On that day, He will judge all His enemies and permanently do away with them and no one who trusted in Him will be shown for a fool. On that day, what we barely dared to trust with our feeble hearts we will shout with robust voices: Christ the King!