



## Sing a New Song

Christ the King  
November 21, 2021

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Chris

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ, Amen. It is Christ the King Sunday. The final Sunday in the church year and a festival in the church that I relish though many of my colleagues do not. Some will say that this festival day is outdated. No one obeys a “king” anymore. God is not a male or a female and we should drop such masculine language for God just because our feeble minds cannot understand that in God there is no gender. Yet, we are not speaking about God, we are speaking about Jesus, the Christ. Jesus. Savior of the world. Jesus, the Messiah, who Paul writes about in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6: “<sup>13</sup> In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you <sup>14</sup> to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup> which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup> It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.”

And Lord knows we struggle with kingship and obedience in our post-modern and civilized world. We do not genuflect like our catholic brothers and sisters before the altar set with bread and wine – though it is a powerful moment of reverence to God not obedience to the priest of the church. When I arrived at Ascension, I brought the tradition of bowing at the altar in reverence for this holy house and who it belongs to – soon we reintroduced acolytes and taught them to bow – a few years later our ushers, when bringing the offering, and our communion assistants, when they finished serving communion, began to bow. Many of you make the sign of the cross during worship, in reverence and worship of God. Martin Luther said: “In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit” These words begin the orders for Confession and Forgiveness in worship. The sign of the cross, whether traced over the body or on the forehead, is a sign and remembrance of Baptism. Making the sign of the cross here is a remembrance that resurrected life is promised to those baptized into Christ. This seems pretty easy. However, not many of us are ready to worship Jesus as King in the style offered in the book of Revelation: <sup>10</sup> They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” <sup>11</sup> And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> singing, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” Let’s be real some of us would have a hard time getting back up!

And if that is not enough to invite you to offer worship and praise to our Savior Jesus as King. Well then, we have Jesus’ own words: Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” “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.” Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “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.”

Had I been Jesus or stood near him in this exchange—I would have answered that question in response to Pilate. I would have told Pilate what I had seen and heard—the blind see, the deaf hear, the mute speak, the leper is cleansed, the lame walk, and the dead rise. I would have told Pilate that there is forgiveness of sins in the eyes and voice of Jesus and there is a promise of life. Eternal, everlasting, abundant life. I would like to think that I would have spoken all of this to Pilate in response to this question to Jesus, “What have you done?” In reality, Jesus chooses to instead answer Pilate’s question with a very simple answer. When Pilate asks Jesus the question, “What have you done?” Jesus answers very simply—I have come into the world.

And the rest for you and me is history.

St. Augustine once said, “Jesus Christ will be Lord of all or he will not be Lord at all.” And in this exchange between Jesus and Pilate—Jesus establishes that fact. With little fanfare, at this the coronation of Jesus, Jesus establishes his kingdom and lordship of all by accepting Pilate’s crown and casting aside the crown of gold his disciples, followers, and the world expected him to pick up and place on his head. There is no struggle here for



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Jesus. When Jesus answers the question, what have you done...he tells Pilate clearly...I have come into the world. The meaning of that statement is lost on Pilate—but it is not lost on any of us two thousand years after the fact. There is no struggle here for Jesus—no wrestling with God the Father who watches from heaven—there is simply acceptance. The struggle with God is indeed ours to wrestle.

“Isn’t it the greatest possible disaster,” said Simone Weil, a Jewish Mystic, “when you are wrestling with God, not to be beaten.” Time and time again the world tells us that we are the ones who must struggle, challenge, wrestle, and ultimately win if we are to succeed and find greatness, happiness, satisfaction, wholeness. It is the world, always, which tells us that we need to be on top and to get there we must push our parents, our children, our families, our friends, our coworkers, and even our fellow Christians out of the way at times—we need to struggle, wrestle, and move ahead to find our place at the top. And God in Jesus Christ, would simply look at us and say, “let go.”

Let go of the world, and to the trappings of who we are as citizens of the kingdom of this world. Forget the crown of gold and look instead to the crown of thorns and the example of Christ and the promise of life everlasting in the kingdom of God. Wrestle with God and pray that God wins. Wrestle with God and pray that God blesses you in your struggle and shows you a new way of living that you may learn to sing a new song.

It is not so hard to do – though we struggle to convince ourselves of that truth. What does it look like to sing a new song – do you remember the tune? Do you know the words: sing a new song, unto the Lord, let your song be sung from mountains high, sing a new song, unto the Lord, singing alleluia. And if that is too new for you, this one you will remember. Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind but now I see. Do you remember the new tune to the same words? Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I’m found, was blind but now I see Alleluia. Here, in this past year, we have learned to sing new songs. We have sang those songs on zoom video screens, and in small groups, and behind masks, and still we sing. Still we sing. We sing the song given to us in a manger. Away in a manger, no crib for his bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay. We sing the song given to us from a cross. Were you there, when they crucified my Lord. Were you there, when they crucified my Lord. Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord. We sing the song given to us in front of an empty tomb. Alleluia, alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia. We sing the song given to us to remember. Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom. Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom. And we sing the song that gives praise to the One who calls us by name and sets us free to let go of this life that we might look with hope and joy to the life to come. Then sings my soul, my Savior, God to thee, how great thou art. How great thou art. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, how great thou art, how great thou art.

Bobby Richardson, second basemen for the New York Yankees prayed this prayer at a Fellowship of Christian athletes meeting some years ago. Dear God, your will—nothing more—nothing less—nothing else. Amen. When Pilate asks Jesus the question, “What have you done?” Jesus answers the question with, “I have come into the world,”...Jesus could have just as easily have said, “God’s will.” For you and I the question and the answer are the same. “What have you done Christian? I hope I can say, God’s will—nothing more—nothing less—nothing else.

What must you and I let go of in our lives to answer the question of our living with...God’s will—nothing more—nothing less—nothing else? What are the activities in our lives that speak of life but lead to death? What are the sorrows too deep and the weight too heavy to bear? What will it take for us to be able to answer with our Lord and Savior Jesus...Dear God, your will—nothing more—nothing less—nothing else.

May we be so bold in our wrestling with God. May we be so daring in our answers to questions we do not want to be asked. May we be so full of hope in our living of these days that we look to God in Jesus Christ for an answer to the question Pilate asks Jesus, “what have you done?” Let our answer be as unwavering and as awe-inspiring as the answer of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear God, your will—nothing more—nothing less—



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nothing else. Dear God, your will--nothing more—nothing less—nothing else. Say it with me...Dear God, your will—nothing more—nothing less—nothing else. Amen. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.