



Sunday November 23, 2025

Christ the King

So, today, we celebrate Christ the King's Sunday. It's the final Sunday of our church year. A day, the church has set aside to name, in this middle of our troubled world, who we owe our allegiance to, Christ the King. Christ the King was declared a feast day by the Catholic Church a hundred years ago in 1925, and Lutherans adding it to their feast day schedule in the 1970s.

We look back, 1925 was a year that was filled with violence and fear and political turmoil, leaders who promised order at a terrible cost. It was the year of the publication of Hitler's Mein Kampf. It was the year that Mussolini declared himself a dictator of Italy, and we know what happened to the civil liberties after that. The Ku Klux Klan held their first major march in Washington, DC, and in the middle of all this Pope Pius XI set forth a teaching that in this world of competing powers, it is Christ who is our ultimate King to whom we owe our total allegiance.

Our gospel lesson today brings us to the point interestingly of Jesus's death, this unsettling image for someone we declare King. With Luke we stand at Galgotha with Jesus between two criminals. The crowds are mocking Jesus, the soldiers gambling for his clothes, one criminal joins in the insults and the other, broken and honest, turns to Jesus and says, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom and we hear that beautiful response of Jesus. Truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise. For a moment about this criminal, he was not a politician, he didn't have a platform or a plan to change the empire, he was being honest about himself and just put forth a simple plea, remember me, and Jesus promises to in paradise. So, we see that Jesus's kingdom starts where people where we are most broken, people who have nothing to give and it reaches into our suffering and offers mercy. That's why the church in 1925 pointed to Christ as King. It wasn't an endorsement of any earthly ruler, it was a reminder that when politicians promise safety and glory but leave millions in poverty, when nations fight and people suffer, when systems deny dignity to the poor and the marginalized, our final loyalty is to another kind of king. Jesus's rule



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who calls us to different values than the world offers, values of truth and service forgiveness, compassion and justice.

So, what does this mean for today in a world that is upsetting around us? How do we live under the reign of a king who died on the cross? It means our allegiance is not to those political slogans or to the comfort of systems that ignore the poor. God calls us up to a higher loyalty. When the world measures success by wealth or domination, Jesus measures it by love and service. When leaders offer security by ignoring injustice, Jesus instead calls us from the cross to justice. Our king does not promise that life will be easy. Rather, he promises that even in the suffering, truth and mercy have the final word. So, in a world where politicians seek revenge or to destroy their opponents, what does Jesus do from the cross? He proclaims a kingdom that gives the hand of forgiveness.

Through Jesus's trial, if you recall, Pilate asked what is truth. Remember that? Jesus came speaking and living the truth, telling us who God is, showing us how to love and refusing to use power for power's sake. To follow Jesus is to look at the facts of suffering, hunger and violence, exploitation but not look away. Living the reign of truth means we name what is wrong. We refuse to be comforted by cheap answers and we work to heal what is broken. And of all, it tells us that we must practice mercy. The criminal on the cross could not earn forgiveness. He only asked and Jesus's answer shows that the reign of God reaches anyone who turns honestly to him. We are called to be a people to forgive, to restore who stand with the wounded. That changes how we treat one another and how we engage the world. To swear allegiance to Jesus who is king of kings and lord of lords is to commit ourselves to ending needless suffering in whatever ways we can by advocating for humane policy, supporting organizations that need and shelter, reducing harm to God's creation and caring for our neighbors close at home.

Now, in all of this, we may feel small facing these daunting world problems that just seem so entrenched. But the good news is that the reign of God does



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not depend on doing big things alone. It is built on our small acts of truth and mercy. The criminal on the cross didn't feed a nation. He simply sought Jesus and asked for mercy. So, our small acts, a kind word, a meal shared, a call for justice matter because they reflect our king's way. We must also remember that Jesus' kingship frees us from fear. Even when earthly leaders fail us when the system seems to be crumbling around us, Christ's faithfulness remains. Our hope is not in the next election, the latest policy or the newest leader. Our hope is in Jesus, who is Lord over all. That doesn't mean we retreat from the world. It means we step into it courageously, shaped by the truth and compassion of our king.

So, on this Christ, the King's Sunday, as we prepare for Thanksgiving, we give thanks first and foremost for having such a loving and forgiving sovereign in Jesus. We have been invited to align ourselves with his truth and as we prepare for augmenting Christmas just around the quarter, can you believe it? We're a call to ponder. Where will my loyalty lie? Do I put my trust in the powers that promise safety at the cost of justice? Or do I follow the crucified king who calls us to serve, to love, to seek peace, to demonstrate hope, and to know joy?

Remember the promise Jesus made to the repentant criminal. Truly, I tell you today you will be with me in paradise. That promise is for all of us. Our king is not distant. He meets us in our worst hour, and he brings us to his victory. Revelation assures us that Christ is the ruler over every earthly power. And John's gospel teaches us that this ruler's weapon is just truth and love. That is what changes everything. So, today, as we prepare to leave this place and enter a world that is still full of trouble, let us go forth as a people who have sworn allegiance to Jesus, the one who was, is, and to come. And as we enter this season of Advent next Sunday, we continue our work for justice, to live in truth, to practice mercy, and to hold fast to hope. To let our lives point to the reign of truth, a reign that began in the loneliest places and reaches out into eternity, promising to us that we have a true king who is King of Kings and Christ the Lord. Amen.