

**THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT - March 12 & 13, 2005**  
**St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI**

**THIS IS A KING? John 19:17-22, 25-27**

“INRI.” “Jesus Nazarenum, Rex Iudaeorum.” Jesus of Nazareth. King of the Jews. When you think of a king, what comes to your mind? Someone who is strong? Someone who is an obvious leader, bold, confident, charismatic? Someone who has armies at his beck and call? If you had been walking into Jerusalem about 1,975 years ago and had seen three men being executed outside the city at the place of the skull which in Hebrew was called Golgotha, would you have been taken aback by the sign nailed above the person in the middle which read, “Jesus of Nazareth. King of the Jews”? This is the sign that the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, had written and nailed above the head of Jesus. The religious rulers of the Jews objected to Pilate and said, “Write that, “he said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’”(Jn 19:21) Pilate responded to them, “What I have written. I have written.” (Jn 19:22) As we consider the notice that Pilate wrote and placed above Jesus and Jesus’ own actions and words we want to answer the question – **THIS IS A KING?** As we examine what has happened to Jesus and listen to his trial before Pilate we learn **I) What Kind Of King Jesus Is.** If Jesus really is a king then it would be good to understand **II) Why Is He Being Punished like a Criminal?** As we watch his actions and words from that cross another questions crosses our mind, **III) Why Is He So Accepting Of His Situation?**

**WHAT KIND OF KING IS JESUS?**

The Jewish religious leaders perceived Jesus as a threat to their power base and positions. Jesus attracted large crowds. He was a popular preacher. We are told that he taught as one who had authority. He knew what he was talking about and he could get it across to the people. He also performed miracles, healing the sick, the blind, and the lame and even raising the dead. Jesus also claimed to be the promised Savior of the world. In fact, he claimed to be God Almighty. This is why the Jewish religious council condemned Jesus to die because he claimed to be God. However, since the Jews did not have the authority to execute anyone because the Romans were ruling in Palestine, they had to have the Roman governor sign the execution order and have Jesus put to death. They could not bring the charge that Jesus claimed to be God before Pontius Pilate and expect him to put Jesus to death. So they brought this charge before the Roman Governor. The Jews said that Jesus claimed to be a king and opposed Caesar the Emperor of the Roman Empire. When Pilate asked Jesus if he were a king, Jesus answered him, “Yes, it is as you say.” (Mk 15:2b) But then Jesus explains to Pilate that he is a different type of king. He tells the governor, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” (Jn 19:36) Jesus makes it clear that he is indeed a king. But he is not like the kings of this world. He doesn’t have armies. He doesn’t rule in the same manner that we are accustomed to kings of this world ruling. So Pilate took what Jesus had told him and he had written, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”

Then what kind of king is Jesus? He is our heavenly king. He is the ruler of the entire universe. He is the king who came to this earth to fight for us and to face the enemies that we are unable to defeat and who continue to threaten and harass us. In the Old Testament kings were there to protect their people and to lead them and go out and fight their battles for them. They did not sit behind the lines and send the soldiers out to fight. They were in the front lines leading the charge. This is the type of king that Jesus came to this earth to be. As our heavenly king Jesus led the charge against sin, against the devil and against death. He battled against the temptations to sin set before him by the devil and by the unbelieving world in which he lived. The good news is that Jesus overcame temptations for us. He

defeated sin and he defeated the devil's temptations and his charges against us. The final enemy that our king faced was death. He battled with eternal death, the punishment that all the human race deserves for our imperfections, our failure to be perfect. For three hours in darkness Jesus experienced the torments and pains of eternal damnation. He was forsaken by his heavenly Father; he knows what it's like to experience the sufferings of the damned in hell. Because that is what he experienced while on that cross. In great agony and pain he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46c). Jesus then faced physical death, the separation of his soul from his body. When he had suffered the eternal punishment for our sins, he could cry out in victory, "It is finished." (John 19:30) Then having completed his assignment and mission to this earth he could shout out (this is not the gasping cry of a man defeated and dying, this is the triumphant cry of someone who has won) "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46) This is like the shouts and cries of basketball players who have just won the championship game.

So Pilate's statement hung above Jesus' head is so true. This is the king of the Jews. This is also the king of the universe.

### **WHY IS OUR KING BEING PUNISHED LIKE A CRIMINAL?**

If this is King Jesus' victory, then why is he being punished like a criminal? This is the manner in which he came to conquer our enemies. As Jesus said, "You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:25-28) The manner in which Jesus came as a king was as a servant. He came to serve and to do for us. In fact, just hours before he was nailed to the cross, Jesus had been on his hands and knees washing the dirty feet of all twelve of his apostles. When he had finished he said, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him." (John 13:15-16) Jesus was a servant king. He willingly endured the eternal punishment of our sins. He knew that this was coming. In fact, in the Garden of Gethsemane just hours before he was crucified, he prayed to his heavenly Father, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

This certainly does not seem like a king's victory. But as our God tells us, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9) The manner in which God does things often does not make sense to us, but he knows what he is doing and it all works in accord with his plans. Who would think that a man dying on a cross could rescue the entire human race from the sufferings of hell, yet that is what Jesus accomplished by his life, innocent death on the cross and his glorious resurrection from the grave. Our king is willingly allowing himself to be punished for us. This is all part of God's plan to rescue us and deliver us from what we should get for our sins.

### **WHY IS OUR KING SO ACCEPTING OF HIS SITUATION?**

But now the final question, why is our king so accepting of his situation? Why does he allow himself to be railroaded and convicted even though everyone knows he is innocent? Did you notice that Jesus doesn't complain? In fact, Isaiah had foretold, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not

open his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:7) Jesus here demonstrated his great love for all of us. As he once said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) Here we see our king offer himself as a human sacrifice for everyone of us. He wants all of us to spend eternity with him in glory so he goes through this great suffering and torment so that we might never have to experience such pain and be forever separated from our God and all his blessings.

You also see that love in his care for his mother. As Jesus looked down from the cross he saw his mother standing there. Just think what his mother must have been feeling. If any of you parents have ever lost a child, you know the pain and grief that you go through. Then to be a parent and watch your innocent Son be executed with criminals and considered as one, what pain. Just as Simeon said to Mary when they had brought Jesus to the temple when he was 40 days old, “And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” (Luke 2:35b) With Mary were her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene along with the disciple whom Jesus loved who is the Apostle John. Since Jesus was the oldest son and his mother seems to have been a widow at this time, it was his responsibility to see to her care. Jesus’ brothers and sisters at this time did not believe in him. There was no Social Security, no widow’s pension to assist Mary. Often widows became beggars if they had no children. Jesus is concerned that his mother is taken care of. So he says to Mary, “Dear woman, here is your son” and then to John, “Here is your mother.” John then writes, “From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” (John 19:26-27) Our Savior was concerned that his mother’s physical needs would be taken care of after his death.

Just as Jesus was concerned about his mother’s physical well being and care so he is concerned about each of us. As our king he says, “Don’t worry saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:31-33) Our Savior takes care of us so we don’t have to worry and fret.

This is a king? Yes! Jesus is the most wonderful king the world has ever seen. He is the only perfect king that has ever lived. He is the king who gave his life for us. He is not concerned about lining his pockets with our money. Rather he is concerned about rescuing us and saving us for eternity with him in heaven. He is also concerned about taking care of our needs on this earth until we finally get to be with him forever. This is the king! He is our perfect King and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen