

Trinity XXII

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

- [0 : 00] Some of you have noticed and commented that my sermons have been very direct about spiritual warfare lately. And that's encouraging because I rarely remember what I preach from week to week.
- I'm very grateful for ears that hear. I commend you for being like the noble Bereans that St. Paul praised in Acts chapter 17 for their careful listening to the Word of God.
- To be fair, I've preached on the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels where it's hard not to address spiritual warfare. Last week, I preached on Ephesians chapter 6 that went along with Isaiah chapter 59, which again is all about spiritual warfare.
- And this week, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. Another feast calling the church to action. We just happen to be in that time of the church year where we are called to be faithful as a church.
- And in these anxious times that we live in, that call is needed now more than ever. Let me give a brief background to this feast while we celebrate Christ the King.
- [1 : 24] This feast was established in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. Roman Catholics, however, were not the only ones to incorporate this feast into their calendar.
- Many others like Lutherans and of course Anglicans adopted this feast as well. The reason why so many thought this was a good idea to celebrate this feast is because the theme of kingship is the very fabric of Christianity.
- The word Messiah means anointed one, which speaks of kingship or of a king.
- When we say that Jesus is Lord and king, what we are saying is that all other rulers, all other magistrates, all other governments are subservient to him.
- Jesus is king. He is Lord over all. But that still begs the question, why make that a theme, a feast in 1925?
- [2 : 40] Well, the world was experiencing some pretty radical changes during this time. Atheistic governments were seeking to eradicate Christianity from any public influence.
- And there were massive persecutions in places like Mexico and Eastern Europe. And the biggest threat during this time came from Russia.
- Think about it. The Bolshevik Revolution took place from 1917 to 1923. And that revolution ended with Lenin and his communist zealots instituting what became known as the Soviet Union.
- It is estimated that some 62 million people lost their lives during this reign of terror. By the time that Khrushchev stepped away as leader of the Soviet Union in 1964, it is reported that some 50,000 clergy alone had been martyred by this ruthless communist regime.
- This was a time when communism threatened the world, but Christianity was its top target. Why? Because Christians believe that the state nor government is God.
- [4 : 16] And that Jesus Christ is the only ruler over all things. So what relevance does the Feast of Christ the King have for us today?

Well, we live in a day where we are told that religion needs to stay in our home or within the four walls of the church.

Any public profession of traditional Christian teaching is often considered hate speech. To be pro-life is considered to be anti-woman.

To speak against the idea of minors taking puberty blockers so that they can transition into another sex is seen as an unwillingness to allow kids to express themselves.

We actually have a small group of educators and social justice leaders trying to get the word pedophile thrown out of our vocabulary by talking about MAP.

[5 : 21] Minor attracted people. That is, people attracted to young kids. But what really is disconcerting is the crackdown now on free speech.

And the muzzling of any different opinions whatsoever. We are told to trust the experts because they have our collected interest at heart.

We are told that our religion should stay out of the bedroom. And yet the bedroom is all that we are bombarded with in our media, in our culture.

Friends, this is not about red or blue. It's not about politics. It is about being Christian. It's that simple. And we have a calling as baptized Christians who confess Jesus Christ as Lord to stand up for truth.

To live that truth in the public square. Our moral theology is just as important as our dogmatic theology. Let me say that again.

[6 : 36] Because there are a lot of people saying, I don't want anything to do with talking about morality. Our moral theology is just as important as the theology we confess each and every week in the creed.

This is not about bumper sticker evangelism. Nor proclaiming our allegiance with yard signs. Nor leaving tracks for waiters or waitresses in restaurants.

And if you do that, I hope you give a good tip. This is about living out the truth as children of God. In our gospel text, Pilate asked Jesus the question that is above all questions.

We heard in John chapter 18, verse 37, Pilate therefore said to him, are you a king? Jesus answered, you say rightly that I am a king.

For this reason I was born and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.

[7 : 51] What Pilate rightly heard Jesus saying is that he was a king. Which challenged the Roman emperor Caesar.

That was a dangerous, that was a reckless statement for anyone to make. But Jesus is not just anyone.

And he is claiming far more than what Caesar ever claimed. In the words of our epistle text of Colossians chapter 1, verses 16 through 20, we heard those words about Jesus.

For by him, Jesus, all things were created that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created through him and for him.

And he is before all things and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.

[9 : 02] That in all things he may have preeminence. For it pleased the father that in him all the fullness should dwell. And by him to reconcile all things to himself.

By him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross.

Jesus is not just any old king or governor. Jesus is Lord over everything. And he came into this world to seek and save all of us.

Lost sheep. Jesus came for the woman who lives in sorrow for ending her pregnancy. He came for the teen who has issues with body image.

Or the one who is sexually confused. He came for all people. You know, people like us. Selfish and sinful people.

[10 : 14] And what he calls the church to do is to be. To be who we were created to be. Being washed.

Being cleansed. We are to be thankful people. Who proclaim that his kingdom is not one that promotes despotism or tyranny.

His kingdom is for the broken. It's for all of us. The kingdom of God is for the poor and the elderly that have been abandoned. His kingdom is for the one who is constantly struggling with sickness and disease.

Or with chronic hurt and pain. As we heard Jesus say to Pilate. My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world.

My servants would fight. So that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from here. His kingdom is not from here. And it is governed by a whole different set of values.

[11 : 19] And it's based on love and mercy and grace. Friends, the feast of Christ the King calls us to offer the world something far better than the confusion that we hear today.

It's about boldly proclaiming that Jesus is King of all kings. He is ruler above all rulers. And it's not about ducking from public life.

Living in fear. But boldly proclaiming the truth. Knowing we will be made fun of. Boldly proclaiming the truth.

And yet here's the key. Doing it in a spirit of love. Not wrath. That's our calling.

The kingdom of God is found in the church. Which often looks inept. Weak. Confused. And a mess.

[12 : 26] And yet it is the body of Christ. And we are called now. To point people to the cross. Which seems like utter defeat.

Doesn't it? But in the cross. Jesus overcame. Satan. And death. And his resurrection is the proclamation of his victory.

For us. It's about ministering to the weak and the unimportant. Because the kingdom of God belongs to such people. It's about standing up for the vulnerable.

Like the unborn. And loving mothers. No matter what decisions haunt their past. It's about being men. Who seek to be faithful protectors.

And courageous defenders. For those whom they love. It's about caring for the elderly. Who might be confused. And are often lonely.

[13 : 27] It's about the mentally ill. Or the physically challenged. That teach us more. Than what the PhDs can ever teach. In the way of compassion.

Care. And what true humanity should look like. It's about loving. In the way that we have been loved. Radically.

And sacrificially. And it is about standing up for truth. Not making ourselves the center of attention. But as simple messengers.

Pointing people to Jesus. Who is the loving and caring king. Who rules and reigns. It's about living with the comfort.

That no matter what craziness happens. Especially as we approach election day. We belong to Jesus. And his kingdom.

[14 : 27] Is governed by a different ethic. And a different way of life. It's governed by truth and love. Because that's who our king is.

The feast of Christ the king. Is about confessing Jesus as Lord. And seeking to live in obedience. That means us.

Seeking to live in obedience. To his lordship. In our everyday lives. It's about attempting to love as he loved.

Selflessly. It's about attempting to live as he lived. Humbly and generously. And yes. We will never attain. To such selflessness.

But that's the purpose. And that's the aim. Of our lives. Everything else. Is a bunch of rubbish. And it's about hope.

[15 : 27] In a world that often. Seems hopeless. As we recognize that no ruler. No country. No ideology. Or opposition. Will ever stand.

Against the king. And ruler over all. Jesus the Christ. Amen. In the name of the father. And of the son. And of the holy ghost.

Amen.