

*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.*

Text: Matthew 27:27-31 SS 11/20/11 Ezek. 34:11-16, 23-24 1 Cor. 15:20-28 Ps. 27

Christ the King Sunday

Hymns: 748, 769, 757, 738

### WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS!?

O sacred Head now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,  
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown.  
O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss, till now was Thine!  
Yet, tho' despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine. (TLH #172:1)

Dear fellow believers in Jesus Christ,

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. It is Christ the King Sunday. It calls to mind Jesus as our almighty, glorious heavenly King! And yet the text we just heard for today talks about Jesus being pitifully bullied and mocked and humiliated and cruelly executed by crucifixion. With that picture of Jesus in our mind's eye it is fair to ask, **"WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS!?"**

Just before our text Pontius Pilate had Jesus flogged. Roman flogging was gruesome and terrible. The 'trick' was to whip the victim until he was close to dead, but not kill him. Sometimes he died anyway. No wonder that later Jesus was too weak to carry His cross.

We're told that *"the governor's soldiers took Jesus."* They could only take Jesus because He allowed them to. Jesus had told His disciples earlier that night that He would be handed over to His enemies who would crucify Him (Mt. 26:21-31). Jesus willingly went to the Garden of Gethsemane where He knew His enemies would capture Him and take Him away. Jesus had said, *"I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again"* (Jn. 10:17-18).

We're told that *"the whole company of soldiers [gathered] around"* Jesus. There were at the very least sixty soldiers, and there may have been many more. Psalm 22 had prophesied this in figurative language: *"Many bulls have surrounded Me. ... Many dogs have surrounded Me, a band of evildoers has encompassed Me"* (vv. 12, 16). Surrounded by all those Roman soldiers Jesus felt as if he were in a pen surrounded by huge, powerful bulls that wanted to crush Him, or by a pack of wild dogs who wanted to tear Him apart.

*"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."* After Herod's soldiers had flogged Jesus they put a white robe on Him that clung to His torn, bleeding back. This different group of soldiers now pulled that robe off of Jesus and *"put a scarlet*

*robe on Him.*” In those days kings wore scarlet robes. They pushed a crown of thorns onto Jesus’ head. And they put a stick in Jesus’ hand – like a ruler’s staff of office – ridiculing Jesus for saying He is a king. They *“knelt in front of Him and mocked Him. ‘Hail, king of the Jews!’ ... They spit on Him, and took the staff and struck Him on the head again and again.”*

On the cross Jesus prayed also for these soldiers, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Lk. 23:34). In their blind unbelief they had no idea that Jesus Christ is *“the Word ... made flesh”* – the almighty Son of God who, with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, created and rules over all things (Jn. 1:1f.). They mocked God the Son who, in His great love, had come down to earth to save them and us all. They rejected their only God and Savior. The Bible says that Jesus *“humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philip. 2:0-11). When Jesus comes again on the Judgment Day in all of His divine glory sitting on His throne, these same soldiers who once mocked Him will again bow before Him. Then they will acknowledge Jesus as God and King. But then it will be too late for them to be saved. Jesus Christ, whom they rejected during their lives, will reject them. He whom they led away to crucifixion will send them to hell for all eternity. *“Do not be deceived,”* the Bible warns us, *“God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”* (Gal. 6:7). *“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (He. 10:31).

Jesus allowed His enemies to do all that they did to Him. He didn’t try to stop them. Jesus didn’t hate His enemies or get revenge on them. He didn’t scream, *“It isn’t fair!”* and become angry with His Father over it. Jesus didn’t refuse to accept His Father’s will that He suffer such humiliation and torture, and die so cruelly by crucifixion. Jesus didn’t say that we’re not worth it. Jesus humbly, willingly submitted to it all.

**“WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS?!”** The Jews had a real problem answering that question. Jesus had come along preaching a message of repentance and faith in Him for forgiveness and eternal salvation. He had told the religious leaders of the Jews that they, too, were sinners who needed to repent because they were also hopelessly lost in their sins. Their reaction was **“NEVER!”** **“WE are the trained experts in the Scriptures. You, Jesus, are the uneducated son of a carpenter. WE are right in teaching that a person gets to heaven by his own good works in obedience God’s laws. YOU, Jesus, are a false teacher and a blasphemer for saying that You are the Messiah, the Son of God.”**

Even the Jews who believed that Jesus is the Messiah had a hard time understanding what kind of king He is. After Jesus was crucified and before they realized He had risen some of His disciples said, *“We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel”* (Lk. 24:21). The Jews believed that their Messiah was going to make their nation free and powerful again. The Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah were confused when He was crucified and their nation of Israel had not been freed from the control of the Roman Empire. Even after Jesus’ resurrection, just before His ascension, His disciples asked Him, *“Now are You going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”* (Ac. 1:6). The Holy Spirit led them out of their confused ideas about Jesus as an earthly king who came to establish an earthly kingdom for them. He led them to understand what kind of King Jesus is.

The Jews had told Pontius Pilate that Jesus claimed to be a king (Lk. 23:2; Jn. 19:12). They wanted Pilate to think that Jesus was trying to lead a revolt against Rome so that Pilate would approve of executing Him. As Pilate and the Roman soldiers looked at Jesus, what must they have thought? **“WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS?!”** Jesus had no army. Many of His own people hated Him and wanted Him dead. He was beaten and humiliated. As far as Pilate and the Roman soldiers could see, Jesus was defeated in whatever His purpose was.

We see Jesus with spit on His face, wearing a crown of thorns, and whipped half to death. We see the Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders screaming their taunts and mockery and hate-filled words at Him. We see Jesus nailed to a cross by His hands and feet, bloody and dying. **“WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS?!”**

By the grace of God by the faith He has given us, we know the answer to that question. Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to earth to save all people. Jesus took upon Himself our sins and the sins of the whole world. Jesus bore the humiliation, rejection, anger, hatred, punishment, and death that WE deserved for our sins. Jesus, our heavenly King, willingly gave HIS life on the cross in our place, and rose again. Jesus, our heavenly King, won the battle against Satan, sin, death, and hell for US and gave US the victory. Jesus, our heavenly King, has given us forgiveness for all of our sins, salvation for our souls, and eternal life in heaven. *“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes”* – Jesus’ scourging – *“we are healed”* (Is. 53:4-5).

Today, Christ the King Sunday, is the last Sunday of the church year. Jesus, our heavenly King, has safely brought us through the past year. We have received His forgiveness and salvation, strengthening and help and blessings. Next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent when we celebrate Jesus’ birth. Christ, our heavenly King, humbled Himself and came as the baby in the manger in Bethlehem to live and die and rise again for our salvation. In a little over a month we start the new year of 2012. We can face the future with confidence and peace in Jesus, our heavenly King. And one day Jesus will take us to live with Him in His heavenly kingdom forever.

**“WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS?!”** Jesus Christ is almighty God the Son in human flesh. Jesus Christ is the *“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”* (Rev. 19:16). Jesus is your God and my God, your Savior and my Savior, the Lord of your life and the Lord of my life. **“WHAT KIND OF KING IS THIS?!”** Jesus is YOUR King and Jesus is MY King!

Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated, victim crucified!  
Death is through the cross defeated, sinners justified.

Christ triumphant, ever reigning, Savior, Master, King!  
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining, hear us as we sing:

Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the\_ eternal name! Amen.

(Worship Supplement, #757:3, 1)