

## **Theme: “Names of Wondrous Love” – KING**

**Text: John 18:33-37 (EHV)**

<sup>33</sup> Pilate went back into the Praetorium and summoned Jesus. He asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?” <sup>36</sup> Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.” <sup>37</sup> “You are a king then?” Pilate asked. Jesus answered, “I am, as you say, a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

KING. Is there any doubt that this is a fitting name for Jesus?

- † From prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament hundreds of years before His birth where God the Father declared in **Psalm 2**, “**Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion.**” <sup>7</sup> “**I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'**” (Psalm 2:6-7 NKJV).
- † ...to the time of His birth when the Wise Men from the East came looking for Him and asked, “**Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?**” (Matthew 2:2 NKJV).
- † ...to Palm Sunday, when again another Old Testament prophecy declaring Jesus to be KING was fulfilled, “**Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey**” (Zechariah 9:9 NKJV).
- † ...to the very last book of the Bible, Revelation, where Jesus is called, “**KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS**” (Revelation 19:16)...

...there is no doubt, Jesus is KING!

On Good Friday the term *king* was heard again and again regarding Jesus—in accusation, in declaration, and in question by Pilate in our text. And as we read in our text, Jesus did not deny it. He answers Pilate’s question clearly and in that answer shows His “Wondrous Love” in this name and title of KING.

### **I. The King They Wanted**

This name and title was also, of course, written over Jesus’ head at His crucifixion on Good Friday, “**JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS**” (John 19:19). The religious leaders were not happy at all with this sign. **Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews" ' "** (John 19:21 NKJV). It wasn’t that those religious leaders didn’t want a king. They very much wanted the Messiah to be one. They expected Him to be one!

They expected their Messiah king to approve of their self-righteous teachings and ways and pat them on the back for how holy they were and congratulate them on how well they kept God’s Law (as well as all the ones they had added). When Jesus didn’t do this, but instead came preaching a Gospel of repentance and forgiveness in Him they rejected Him. When He called out their false teachings, called them “**hypocrites**” (Matthew 15:7-9), and called them to repentance, well, that was it. He had to go!

They had been waiting for a Messiah who would restore their nation politically. Their idea of a king was one who would rally the people in opposition against their hated Roman conquerors and lead their nation back to the glory days of King David. But when Jesus came preaching, **“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s” (Luke 20:25)** and spoke of a heavenly kingdom without geographical borders, that was unacceptable, and very “un-Messianic” in their eyes. As a result, here they were bringing this “would-be king” to Pilate for execution.

It wasn’t just the religious leaders of the Jews, either. Many of the people of Jesus day also had their ideas as to what kind of king they wanted the Messiah to be; what kind of king Jesus should be. When he had filled their stomachs with miraculous fish and loaves in the wilderness at the feeding of the 5000, they thought they had the king they wanted! This Jesus could be their permanent social security, the one who would take care of all their needs and satisfy all their desires. They couldn’t get beyond the earthly miracle to its heavenly meaning (see **John 6**). As a result they wanted a “Bread King,” but missed the King who was the **“Bread of Life” (John 6:35)** for hungry sinners.

Sadly, these are still the misconceptions and misbeliefs about the Messiah held by many Jewish people today. One prominent media personality, who is also very outspoken about his Jewish faith, has been asked several times in interviews about what he thinks about Jesus, and if he believes that Jesus is the Messiah. He said, “In the Gospels, Jesus vision of Himself as the Messiah is completely different from the prior vision of what the Jewish Messiah is and is actually outside the scope of how the Jews describe the Messiah—or really have ever described the Messiah. The Messiah in Judaism has always been a political figure who is destined to do certain things: Restoring the Kingdom of Israel, maintaining control of that kingdom, bringing more Jews back to Israel. All of these things are considered sort of political things that the Messiah does.”

His responses sound very much like the responses of the religious leaders and many of the people of Jesus’ day. But Jesus did not come to be the “Warrior King,” or the “Bread King” that many were expecting. Certainly, we don’t ever think of Jesus this way...do we?

Let’s ask ourselves the question: What kind of king do we want Jesus to be? Of course we want our Sovereign Lord watching over us and protecting us, providing our daily needs, and guiding and directing our lives. All these things Jesus our KING does for us, according to His wisdom and grace (“undeserved love”).

But don’t we at times want even more from our King? Don’t we want Him to keep all problems and pains away from us? Don’t we expect from His hand skies that are always sunny and paths that are always smooth—forgetting that He *truly* knows what’s best for us? And when that’s not the way life goes, what is our reaction? When cancer strikes, when relatives disappoint, when earthly goods evaporate, when plans fail, when dreams vanish, does the question “Is this the King I want?” sneak into our hearts and minds? Do we begin to question our King’s power—and even worse, begin to question His wondrous love for us?

## II. The King We Need

We need Jesus’ forgiveness us for the times we’ve questioned his kingship. We need Him to send His Holy Spirit to show us again that Jesus is the King we need! What kind of king is that? Listen to what Jesus told Pilate: **“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here” (v. 36)**. As a representative of the greatest world power at that time, Pilate was well aware of what the kings and kingdoms of this world were all about. Now Jesus, the King of wondrous love, was trying to tell him about a better kingdom from a far better place.

Now, make no mistake Jesus is in fact ruling over all things in heaven and on earth for the good of His believers, but often His ways are unseen and beyond our ways. In His infinite power and wisdom He continues to work the best of things out of the worst situations and events. But as Jesus Himself said to Pilate, His kingship and His kingdom are unlike any earthly king or kingdom, **"My kingdom is not of this world...My kingdom is not from here" (v. 36).**

Earthly kings are made kings by their subjects, however, Jesus' kingship is independent of any subjects, He is King! His kingship inevitably creates subjects! His kingdom is not just one nation, but followers from every nation! He does not have an army of destructive warriors, but rather an army of soul-saving witnesses adding more subjects to His kingdom. Besides all that, what other king in history has ever done what Jesus did for His people? What king ever served His people with the selfless, sin-less, life that Jesus lived for us? What king ever won his greatest victory by giving up his life to save his people like Jesus did? What other king has given his people eternal life and the hope of an eternal kingdom of heaven, a kingdom **"not of this world" (v. 36)**, as Jesus has done for His followers by His resurrection from the dead (which no other king has done either by the way!). No this is not the KING we were expecting, or even the KING we wanted, but Jesus is the KING we need!

Jesus' words in v. 36 led Pilate to ask Him, **"You are a king then?"** In His answer, Jesus is not only speaking to Pilate, but to you and me. Let's listen closely to His words: **Jesus answered, "I am, as you say, a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (v. 37).**

Unfortunately, Pilate didn't really listen. Instead of kneeling before the King of wondrous love, he handed him over to the cross. By God's grace we have listened to Jesus' voice and **'belong to the truth'** (which is the name for Jesus we considered last Sunday). This means we listen to and believe the voice of our KING, Jesus. Jesus said earlier in John's Gospel, **"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:5, 27-28).**

That is the kingdom that our KING, our Good Shepherd has given each one of us! A kingdom of eternal peace and life with Him! In that heavenly kingdom, we'll raise with all the saints who have gone before the hymn of praise, **"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:17).**