

"The Power of Our King"

Text: John 18:33-37

As we end another church year – filled again with God’s grace – may that same Giver of all good gifts fill each of us with a deep and abiding appreciation for all that he has done and continues to do for us every moment of our earthly existence – culminating in that moment when we get to spend eternity with him in heaven, an unending existence won for us by our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

The more you look into the problem, the more alarming it is that we have grown so accustomed to make-believe in so many different areas of our lives – critical areas where we cannot afford to pretend. The problem caused by the flood of make-believe is that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between truth and fantasy. It all starts when we are little, when parents tell Junior: “Great job, buddy” for that which was anything but. The pretense continues throughout our developing years and on into adulthood. We are told that girls and boys are just alike, when in countless areas they obviously aren’t. We are told that no culture is better than another, that guns are more to blame than the people that misuse them, that women have a natural right to murder the children within their wombs, and that homosexual relationships are as good and natural as heterosexual.

That’s the sort of false reality we live with day by day, and the inevitable result is that the clear lines between true and false become ever more fuzzy. The list of such things is endless. Home schooled children are all social introverts. All religions are equally good. Mothers who stay at home are somehow less valuable to our society than those who seek outside employment. Spanking a child for rebellion does irreparable harm to that child. Again, the list is endless – to the point, in fact, that we need to actually struggle to recognize and accept reality *as it truly exists*.

With this as our background, let me ask you what is your opinion of the actual, real-life power of your God? I don’t mean what is the opinion you know that you are *supposed* to have - since you are a Christian. I mean what truly is your own, personal opinion of the ability of your God to, for example, change the course of this world when you ask him to? Do you, in other words, believe that your prayers are effective, not only in a general way, but also in a personal and specific way? If you pray for a specific thing in your life, do you really believe not only that your God has the power to change things, but that he actually acts upon your requests? Or

do you believe that what was going to happen is pretty much what will happen no matter what you ask for in your prayers – in effect that God is either incapable or unwilling to alter the course of this life?

Many will find the *honest* answers to these questions to be disquieting and unsettling. For most of us to answer honestly it will take some time and introspective meditation. Our text for this morning speaks to this, and more. It teaches us something about both the power of our God and the reason that he cannot always grant our requests. Interestingly enough, both when God acts and when he does not, the basis for that action is always his love for his children, never his own weakness or impotence. The text that will so guide us this morning is found in John’s Gospel, the 18th Chapter:

^{ESV} **John 18:33-37** *So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

These are the precious words of our God. Acknowledging them to be not only true but effective in our lives day by day, so we pray, **“Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.”** Amen.

The last Sunday of the Church Year has historically been called “Christ the King Sunday.” Our Scripture readings and our sermon text were clearly chosen with that label in mind. All three either refer to Christ as a king or speak of his rule or dominion. In fact in our sermon text it is Jesus himself who acknowledges that he is, in fact, a king.

Why is such a thing important? The short answer is that everything that our God chose to reveal about himself is important – and should be considered important by every one of his children. Yet there’s more to it than just that. When Jesus is our life, how could we not want to know him better? Knowing him better can only strengthen the bond that connects us. We don’t have faith in a Jesus that we cannot know or identify. Our faith is focused on – based on – what we *do* know about

him, not what we don't. Since he has described himself as a king, we need to know him not just as Savior but also as King.

How then is Jesus a king? What exactly does that mean, to him and to us? It means, obviously, that as a king he both rules and exercises power. As a king he is above the laws that he imposes on his subjects.

We tend to lose sight of this aspect of our Savior-God, mostly because our primary picture of him is of a friend and brother. We see his gentleness, his mercy, his compassion, and those characteristics seem to be at odds with the picture of Christ as King. Go back to our text for this morning. Don't you find it a bit difficult to recognize Jesus as a king at the very moment he confirms that he is one? Human eyes see him humbled, friendless, without an army, and condemned to death by a rather obscure Roman government official. And yet we know that he is, nonetheless, exactly what he claimed to be – a king. What are we to make of this? How are we to understand it and what are we to learn from it?

First of all, make no mistake; Jesus had an army at his disposal – an unbeatable and indefatigable army. You will recall what he said to Peter when Peter made his clumsy attempt at swordplay in Gethsemane: ***Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"*** Jesus then went on to provide the key to understanding the entire crucifixion when he said: ***"But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" (Matthew 26:52-54)*** The fact is Jesus didn't lack the army, he refused to use it. Jesus' capture, condemnation and crucifixion therefore didn't prove his weakness; it was in fact the most obvious and telling demonstration of his power. While it was well within both his right and his power to simply crush every single rebellious human being, Jesus demonstrated his true power by showing mercy, by coming not to destroy but to save. The opposite of power is impotence, and Jesus was anything but. Impotence is the inability to resist your enemies. Jesus, on the contrary, made it clear that ***"No one takes (my life) from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father." (John 10:18)*** With an army of angels at his immediately disposal, Jesus was anything but impotent. He chose the path of the suffering servant rather than the avenging king not because he had no choice, but because of his love for fallen mankind. This serves as irrefutable evidence that there are times in life when the difficult thing is impossible to avoid. When Jesus himself prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that his Father find a way around his suffering, the brutal and yet loving answer was that there was no other way. The hard way was the

only way. You and I need to remember that when we come to that same Father in *our* prayers. Sometimes the answer has to be no, not because our God is weak, but because there is no other way.

This morning, however, we do not focus on that meek, distressed Savior in part because *that* Jesus is gone. Mankind saw the last of the lowly, suffering, humble Savior when the breath left his body on Calvary. That Savior will never be seen again. Have you ever stopped to consider that not one bad thing happened to Jesus after his death on the cross? Remember what he said to his disciples even before he ascended to heaven? ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*** Paul said of him in Ephesians 1:20-23 ***"(God the Father) raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him to the church as head over all things."*** Again in Ephesians 4:10 ***"He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things."*** And again in Philippians 2:9-11: ***Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*** And finally the image of heaven revealed to John in Revelation 5:11-14: ***Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshipped.***

This is our God. This is our Savior – as he is now and will be forever. Do not expect to meet him in heaven as he once was but as he now is. Not humbled, but supreme. Not impotent, omnipotent. Not lowly, exalted beyond anything we can now imagine. Once he came in poverty and humility to save us. The next time he will come on the clouds with power and great glory not just as a king, but as the King of kings and Lord of lords – "on the clouds with power and great glory."

From these facts mankind needs to learn several truths. The first is directed both toward all the godless and to our own old Adam. The message is this: *Anyone who expects to find a frail and lowly Jesus when he is called to give account on Judgment Day will be tragically and eternally mistaken. All who expect to find an accommodating and yielding Jesus – a Jesus that refuses to condemn – will be disastrously disappointed.* In the Jesus of heaven they will find nothing soft or meek in the face of rebellion and unbelief. They will not there find a Jesus who, kneeling, draws quietly in the dirt, refusing to exact the punishment due for unbelief. There, *in his own words*, they will find a Jesus who has absolutely no problem announcing a guilty verdict: **"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"**

That's the first lesson, directed again not just toward the godless but also toward that evil that lingers within every single Christian. Do not allow your own old Adam to turn away from this reality. Force that side of you to look and to see. Use that truth, that reality, to beat that evil that still resides in you into submission. The Jesus who came in poverty and humility to serve and to save has completed that work, and has returned to his former glory. A much different Jesus now resides in heaven. *That* Jesus cannot and will not tolerate evil or unbelief. From *that* Jesus the godless can expect no leniency, no mercy, no reprieve.

The second lesson to be learned by seeing Jesus as he is now is directed not to the unbeliever but to the believer alone: *This is your King. This is your God – as he exists now and as he will exist for all eternity.* To you this vision should hold no fear or uncertainty, for just as his promise to condemn all unbelief is certain and immutable, so also is his promise to welcome into his magnificent heaven all those who believe in him. As he will not hesitate to sentence the unbeliever to eternal torment, so he will not hesitate to say to those who were preserved in the faith until the very end of their time of grace: **"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."**

This is the power of our King. This is the power that he, moment by moment, places at our disposal, even now. Know that when you pray, this is the King to which you direct your petitions, and such a God – who has promised to hear – most certainly has the power to do what you ask.

Let this also then be the King to which you direct not only your thanksgiving in the week to come, and always, but also the King to which you unceasingly direct your praise and worship. How much easier it is,

when we see this Savior, to recognize how good and right it is **"whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do,"** to do all to the glory of this great God, our Savior, our King. Amen.

Scripture Readings

ESV **Daniel 7:13-14** "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

ESV **Jude 1:14-25** It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." ¹⁶ These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage. ¹⁷ But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." ¹⁹ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. ²² And have mercy on those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. ²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Michael McEnroe, President Eileen McEnroe, Head Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor Today's Organist: Eileen McEnroe

Last Sunday / Christ the King Sunday – November 22, 2015

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 611 (Verses 1-6) (Red Hymnal)

"The Day is Surely Drawing Near"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 15ff. (Red Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (Daniel 7:13-14) This morning we commemorate the last Sunday of the Church Year, known also by some as "Christ the King Sunday." Our first reading speaks to the royal nature of our Lord Jesus, and explains the sort of rule or dominion we were to expect from him. So also we today look forward to the return of our King, whose rule has already begun in our hearts and will extend into eternity.

The Second Lesson: (Jude 1:14-25) Our second reading reminds us that the time is certainly ripe for Jesus' return. All prophecies have been completed and every sign is in place. We are also told here how to use our time while we wait. Let's be about our Father's business.

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 22. (Red Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 17 (Verses 1-3, 5) (Red Hymnal)

"Oh Worship the King"

The Sermon – Text: John 18:33-37 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"The Power of Our King"

The Offertory – (Hymnal page 22)

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 317 (Verses 1-3) (Red Hymnal)

"Alas, My God, My Sins Are Great"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Red Hymnal page 24ff)

The Distribution -Hymn 755 (Brown Hymnal)

The Nunc Dimittis (Red Hymnal page 30)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 611 (Verse 7) (Red Hymnal)

"The Day is Surely Drawing Near"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking an altar at which to commune** – Since we desire to follow the words of our Savior, we practice "Close Communion" – a practice that is not new to confessional Lutherans. This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting them to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please first meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word.

Attendance - Sunday (51) Average (50)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Wednesday	-5:45 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Thanksgiving Service
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time

CLC News – Pastor Michael Gurath is considering the call to Gethsemane of Spokane, WA.

Usher/Cleaning List – The first draft of the 2016 Usher/Cleaner list is on the mailbox table. Please let Fred Adams know if any changes are needed.

Christmas Party Food Sign-up – If you haven't already, please take a moment to look at the Christmas Party food sheet and sign-up for any items you would be willing to bring. Those who are planning to attend who haven't yet signed up should also do so as soon as possible.

Hymn Requests – If anyone has hymns they would like us to sing during the Sunday Worship Service, please pass them along to Pastor Roehl.

Thanksgiving Service – Our annual Thanksgiving Service is scheduled for Wednesday of this week (November 25th) at 7 pm. Please consider how appropriate it is to gather in the Lord's House to offer him our thanks in a special service for all of the blessings of the past year.

Confirmation families – Please note the 5:45 pm start time for our Wednesday classes through Christmas and let the Pastor know as soon as possible of any scheduling conflicts.