"The Savior 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 carries us into eternity with him in heaven, an unending existence won for us by our Savior, Christ Jesus. 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 – even critical areas where we absolutely cannot afford to pretend. The problem caused by the tsunami of make-believe is that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between truth and lie, fact 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 are not. 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 a child just because of that child's location, and that your gender is whatever you want it to be.

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 schooling children is dangerous. All religions are equally good. Stay-at-home moms demean themselves and their gender. Spanking a child for rebellion does irreparable harm. Again, the list is endless – to the point, in fact, that we need to actually struggle to recognize and accept reality *when and where it truly exists*.

So with *reality* and *truth* 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 or 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 considers 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, unsettling. For most of us to answer honestly it will take some time and introspection. 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. Yet 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."***

This is the Word of God. Acknowledging every word to be not only true but also powerful and effective in our lives every day, so we pray, ***"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."*** Amen.

The last Sunday of the Church Year is celebrated by some as "Christ the King Sunday." "Christ as King" is the theme that connects our Scripture readings and our sermon text for this morning. 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 vital information 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 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? Pilate certainly did. Human eyes saw a man humbled, friendless, without an army, bound and condemned to death by an 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 incomparable, irresistible army. You will recall what he said to Peter when Peter made his clumsy attempt at swordplay in Gethsemane: ***"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; they were in fact the most obvious and telling demonstration of his power. While it was well within both his right and his power simply to 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, or to exercise one's will. Jesus, on the contrary, made it clear that he was, in fact, exercising his will: ***"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 immediate 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 in the Garden of Gethsemane asked his Father to 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 with *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 large 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 worshiped.

This is our God. *This* is our Savior – as he is now and will be forever. *This* is our King. Do not expect to meet him in heaven as he once was but as he now is. Not humbled, 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 or who is all about compromise – will be disastrously disappointed*. In the Jesus of Judgment Day 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 appropriate punishment. 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."*** (Matthew 25:41)

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 rock-solid 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."*** (Matthew 25:34)

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 this divine, heavenly King – 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.

ESV **1 Corinthians 15:20-28** But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the
firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a
man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also
in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits,
then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he
delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every
authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under
his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For "God has put all
things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in
subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under
him. 28 When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be
subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in
all.

ESV **Matthew 25:31-46** "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the
angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be
gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a
shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on
his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right,
'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you
from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was
thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was
naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you
came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we
see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we
see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did
we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them,
'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it
to me.' 41 "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. 42 For I was hungry and you
gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and
you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and
you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we
see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not
minister to you?' 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you
did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will
go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

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."



St Paul Lutheran Church

Bismarck, North Dakota

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
Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Last Sunday of the Church Year – November 22, 2026

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 413
"In Christ Alone"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 31ff. *(Blue Hymnal)*

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

The First Lesson: (1 Corinthians 15:20-28) In our first reading, Paul reminds us not only of Judgment Day and the resurrection of all the dead, but the *reason* why Christians need never fear that day. In fact we ought to eagerly anticipate that day every waking moment, longing always for the return of our Savior Jesus. God grant us hearts that never forget that here we are pilgrims, just passing through.

Psalm 24 (Hymnal page 65)

The Second Lesson: (Matthew 25:31-46) Our Gospel reading provides yet another picture of Judgment Day. Note that while we are not saved by our own good works, those works are used as evidence of the existence of saving faith – since only a faithful heart can produce a truly good work.

The Confession of Faith -
The Nicene Creed *(Projected on Screens)*

The Baptism Hymn – 615 *(Stanzas 1--3)*
"Dearest Jesus, We Are Here"

The Baptism of Atticus Nikolai James Loeb

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 391 *(Stanzas 1--5)*
"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

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

The Offertory – (Projected on Screens)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 414
"Come, Let Us Join Our Cheerful Songs"

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Preparation for Holy Communion *(Hymnal page 38)*

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving *(Hymnal page 41)*

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 391 *(Stanza 6)*
"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time.
A note on Communion: It is a matter of conscience among us, drawn from God's Word, that communing together is an intimate expression of confessional fellowship based on shared beliefs. We therefore ask those who have not publicly declared their unity of faith with us to first meet with the pastor for the information you would need and want before communing. Please understand that we seek only to follow the Word and will of God and are in no way judging your Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (42) Average (35)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	**-9:00 a.m.**	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	**-7:00 p.m.**	– Thanksgiving Service
Friday	**-10:00 a.m.**	– Confirmation Class
Next Sunday	**-9:00 a.m.**	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Stefan Sonnenfeld has returned the call to St. Luke's of Lemmon. Pastor/Missionary Bruce Naumann is considering the calls to Gift of God of Mapleton and St. Paul's of Ponsford, MN. Pastor Paul Krause has accepted the call to Mt. Zion of Detroit, MI. Pastor Chad Seybt has accepted the call to Trinity of Watertown and Zion of Hidewood, SD.

Congratulations! – to Preston and Grace Loeb, to whom a healthy baby boy was delivered on Wednesday of this week. Atticus Nikolai James Loeb is scheduled to be baptized during the service this morning.

Thanksgiving Baskets – The Women's Fellowship is planning Thanksgiving baskets for our shut-ins. The baskets will be assembled this morning during the fellowship hour.

Thanksgiving and Advent Services – Our Thanksgiving service is scheduled for this Wednesday at 7:00pm., followed by our mid-week Advent services the next three Wednesdays.

Church Christmas Party – Our annual Christmas Party is scheduled for Saturday, December 6th. See the sign-up sheet on the mailbox table.