

**“Fit for a King”**  
**A Sermon by Rev. Victoria ByRoade**  
**Christ the King Sunday**  
**Scripture: John 18:33-37**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION:** *Lord Jesus, we pray that you will be in our midst today as we seek to raise your name on high in prayer and praise. Help us to hear what you need us to hear this day. Amen.*

You may have heard this story, but even if you have, I don't think you will mind hearing it again. Many years ago, when Hitler's forces occupied Denmark, the order came that all Jews in Denmark were to identify themselves by wearing armbands with yellow stars of David. The Danes had seen the extermination of Jews in other countries and guessed that this was the first step in that process in their country. The King did not defy the orders. Instead, he had every Jew wear the star. In addition, he, himself wore the Star of David. And, he told every loyal Dane to do the same. The king said, "We are all Danes. One Danish person is the same as the next." He wore his yellow star every day as he went into Copenhagen to encourage his people. The King of Denmark indentified with his people, even to the point of putting his own life on the line.

It is a wonderful story with a powerful point. The only problem is that it isn't true. It's an urban legend. It's been around for a long time and it has been told thousands of times over. And now with the internet, we are getting bunches and bunches of these legendary stories retold. Too bad! What an image for a king it is – a king who identified with his people!

Do your remember Pilate's question to Jesus? "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked. "Is that your idea," Jesus said to him, "or did others talk to you about me?"

You know, that's how these legends get started. People talking about what other people

have said. Jesus was essentially crucified on gossip and rumor. An urban legend had developed around his ministry which told people that he was going to lead a revolt against Rome.

In his conversation with Pilate, Jesus finally does imply that he is a king. "My kingdom," he explains, "is not of this world." Perhaps, my friends, that is what it takes. Perhaps what it takes is to find a King who identifies with his people – a King of heaven – a King of kings from someplace other than this world.

On the church calendar, this is the last Sunday of the year. Next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent which will begin the new liturgical year. This Sunday, in many churches, including ours, is known as Christ the King Sunday, is a relatively new festival. In the 1920's Pope Pius XI saw a Europe reeling from World War I. He saw economic uncertainty. And he saw people willing to turn the governance of their lives over to political leaders who promised to save them. So, Pius XI instituted the festival of Christ the King to assert that no human ruler is Lord, but that the sovereignty of Christ extends to all time and to all space. And from that small beginning, churches today are celebrating Christ the King Sunday.

I know that there will be many of you who are disappointed today that we are not singing Thanksgiving hymns and that my sermon this morning is not about Thanksgiving, but rather, about Christ the King. I am sorry if you are a part of that group. However, I really feel that it is fitting that we close the church year by celebrating Christ as Lord of all. In fact, I think that is **particularly** fitting this year when so many people are out of work, when so many people are worrying from day to day about how they will be able to pay their rent or mortgage and still be able to provide food for their family.

It is on this last Sunday of the church year that we celebrate the culmination of history, when Christ shall reign over all. As the Apostle Paul writes in one of his letters to the church in Phillippi, "Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And so, my friends, it is, indeed, a fitting way to end the church year – maybe especially the end of this church year – with Christ on the throne of the universe. There are simply some things about Jesus that we need to know and understand!

First of all, we believe that Jesus is God incarnate. That is, if you want to understand God, all you have to do is look at Christ.

There was a study done some years back at the University of Minnesota. A physiologist studied identical twins in order to prove how powerful the environment was on these identical twins who were separated form each other at birth and had lived apart for thirty or forty years. Here is what he found: Even though they were separated at birth, these identical twins were still very much alike in many ways. They were alike in their reaction to smoke; the way in which the crossed their legs; even in the similarity of their toothpaste. The physiologist measured their galvanized skin responses using electrodes in their bodies, and their reactions to stimuli were identical. They listened to symphonies and were subjected to shocking noises, and their brains responded just the same.

The reason I am sharing this study with you is that what the Bible says is that Jesus is identical to the Father. Christ is the same substance of the Father – the same nature. If you want to know what the Father is like, look at the genetic reproduction of the Son. There is only

One! Isn't that a perfect analogy? If you want to know what God is like, just look at Jesus.

The second thing we believe about Christ is that he is the Savior of the world. One of the Bible verses most of us know by heart comes from chapter three of John's gospel, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." but as wonderful as that verse is, the next verse is just as – if not even more important for us to hear, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save to world through him."

To hear many Christians talk, you would think that the chief reason Christ came was to condemn people. And if Christ won't condemn certain people, then these Christians certainly will. They have their list of those who don't quite measure up. What is sad is that the world tends to think that those Christians are the ones who speak for Christ. They do not! In fact, Christ even forgave those who crucified him.

There is a humorous story about a community which one year held an Easter pageant. Different people in the community played the various characters. The character of Jesus was played by a big, burly oil-field worker, primarily because he as the only one strong enough to carry the heavy wooden beam which was to be Jesus' cross.

As they came to the part in which Jesus as being led away to be crucified, a little man who was simply playing a part of the jeering crowd got caught up in the emotion of the moment. He joined in the shouts of "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" As the man playing Jesus was being led away, carrying the cross upon his back, he had to walk right in front of this little man who was still shouting at the top of his lungs. The little man was so consumed by the moment that he actually spit on Jesus. Suddenly everything came to a shocked standstill. The big, burly oil-field worker stopped, wiped his face dry, looked at the little man, and uttered the

most memorable line in the entire play: "I'll be back to take care of you after the Resurrection!"

I am sure that you will agree with me that that man who was playing Jesus voiced a totally human response to being spit upon. But...it was not Jesus' response. Here is where the Divine side of Christ shines the brightest. He forgave his enemies, those who cursed him, spit upon him, drove nails through his hands. Surely someone who could do that can forgive you and me! Jesus came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

And you know what my friends? When we condemn others in the name of our Lord, we actually blaspheme against him. It is likely that you all are aware that I just returned from a week of study leave. I spent a part of that week at a conference for an affinity group within the PC(USA) which is working to make the church as generous and just as God's grace. On this study leave and all of the ones you allow me, one of the most amazing things about any of the study leave I take are always the worship services. At this particular conference, there was a worship service which included a song with the words, "I ain't afraid of your God; I ain't afraid of your Jesus. I'm only afraid of what you do in his name."

Friends, part of the reason Christ came into the world was to establish a group of people who would serve him in the world. John refers to those people as "a kingdom" and "priests to serve his God and Father." Do you realize that he is talking about you and me? We have an important role in Christ's work. He has entrusted to us the continuing work of telling the world the Good News that God is not a God of condemnation, but of salvation.

Jesus is God incarnate. Jesus came not to condemn, but to save. And we are those who are called to serve as Christ's rescue team

seeking to save the least and the lost. So... what do you think? Are we fit for our King?

May it be so for you and for me. Amen.

*Thanks to: Brett Blair for his Sermon, "Kingdoms in Conflict", King Duncan for his sermon, "Good News about Christ", "Sermonsfromseattle.com./Christmas\_the\_word\_became.htm.*

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**The First Presbyterian Church  
of Dunedin  
455 Scotland Street  
Dunedin, Florida 34698  
(727) 733-2318 fax (727) 738-4297  
WEBSITE: [fpcdunedin.org](http://fpcdunedin.org)  
E-mail:  
[officeadminfpc@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:officeadminfpc@tampabay.rr.com)  
Victoria ByRoade, Pastor**