

The King Holds Court

Mark 15:1-47

Palm Sunday, March 29, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Jesus is the King. He is holding court.

In the court of the King only the will of the King prevails. A king is not much of a king if he holds court and the will of someone else prevails. Therefore in the court of the king the king's will prevails over His allies. But a truly great king will also hold court and in His court even His enemies will do His will.

And so in the Gospel reading appointed for today in the 15th chapter of Mark's Gospel, King Jesus is holding court. Some of His enemies come before Him in His court. Even though they are His enemies because they are standing in His court, they do His will. And Jesus is not just any king, He is a wise and sublime King. He is a King who is wiser than anyone else of the earth. So when Jesus directs His enemies to do His will when they come into His court, He does not simply direct them to do His will. He has them believe that they are doing their own will. When they believe that they are doing their own will, they will do His will willingly. Jesus is so wise and so sublime that when His enemies stand before Him, they not only do His will. They do His will while all the time thinking that they are doing their own will.

Only the will of the king will prevail in His court. If it doesn't, He is not much of a king. The will of Jesus prevailed among His enemies. He did exactly what He wanted them to do. They turned Him over to Pontius Pilate while accusing Him of many false things all of which were worthy of death.

Once the enemies of Jesus execute the will of Jesus by turning Him over to Pontius Pilate, Pilate now stands in the court of Jesus.

There will come times like these when an enemy dignitary will stand in the court of a king. But even though the foreign dignitary may be powerful, the King still has absolute say in His own court. It does not matter how much power the foreign dignitary may have. It does not matter how high up in the foreign government the dignitary is, the king still has absolute say in His own court. So when Pontius Pilate stands in front of Jesus, Jesus has absolute say over what Pontius Pilate is going to do. Pontius Pilate may have his own will. He may have the things that he wants to accomplish while he stands in front of Jesus. But he will get none of them done. Even though Pontius Pilate is a governor of the mighty Roman Empire, it does not matter. Pontius Pilate is standing in front of Jesus. Pontius Pilate is standing in the court of Jesus. In the court of Jesus only the will of Jesus will prevail. Jesus is the King.

Pontius Pilate tries to accomplish his own will while he stands in the court of Jesus. He tries to let Jesus go. He tries several different ways of letting Jesus go. He asserts that Jesus is innocent, but that does not work. He asks the people, "Shall I crucify your king?" That does not work. He asks them to provide a reason for crucifying Jesus. Clearly Pontius Pilate thinks that Jesus is innocent of any charges. He is challenging the enemies of Jesus to produce proof that Jesus deserves to die. But that does not work. Pontius Pilate even tries to release Jesus because there was a custom that the governor would release a prisoner to the people of Judea in honor of Passover or one of the other feasts. Even that did not work. Pilate had to offer them a choice by custom and the people chose to have Barabbas released to them.

Pontius Pilate did not realize that he was in front of Jesus. Pontius Pilate did not realize that he was standing in the court of the king and the king was Jesus. He did not realize that in the court of Jesus only the will of Jesus would prevail. Pilate could try to have Jesus released all Pilate wanted to. It was not going to work because it was not the will of Jesus.

Jesus demonstrates that He is king over the mightiest empires of the earth. If even Pontius Pilate did the will of Jesus even though Pontius Pilate did not want to do the will of Jesus, then what makes the dictators, presidents, prime ministers, and legislatures of today think that they can make their will go in the face of the will of the king in His kingdom.

In order for the King to sit at court, He must be properly attired.

Kings in the ancient world wore purple. The reason was that purple was the most difficult dye to obtain among the ancients. Because it was rare it was expensive. Therefore the kings of the ancient world made sure that they wore purple in order to prove to the other kings of the earth that their kingdom had the necessary wealth to deck its king out with the finest of clothing.

A king at court wears the badge of his office. The chief badge of office for a king is a crown. There were various kinds and styles of crowns in the ancient and medieval world. It does not matter the style of crown as long as the king is wearing one. When the king sits in His court to render judgments it is proper that He be wearing a crown.

Jesus is the king who is sitting at court in the ancient world. He cannot simply wear any old thing to court. He must wear the finest of purple. He must wear His crown. Furthermore any old king can get his own people to provide him with a purple robe and an appropriate crown. A truly sublime and all powerful king will make his enemies servants provide him with his purple robe and his crown. And that is exactly what Jesus does.

His own enemies provide Him with the purple robe. His own enemies provide Him with the crown of His kingdom. The soldiers of His enemies stand before Him in His court and they bow down to Him. They prostrate themselves before the One who is wearing His purple robe and His kingly crown. They salute Him and say, "Hail to the King."

The enemies of Jesus are so duped by Jesus that they believe that they are doing these things in mockery and sarcasm. But the king knows better. Jesus knows when He is sitting in court. His will is done in court and so the king is properly vested for His kingdom.

The king does not execute His own will. He has other people execute it for Him.

The kings of the earth do not drive their own cars. Someone else drives them for them. Even our president does not drive his own car or fly his own plane. Someone else performs those tasks for him. That way the king can devote himself to important matters of state. The kings of the earth do not provide themselves with their own thrones. Their kingdoms provide them with their thrones. Even our president does not provide himself with his own house and office. The nation provides those things for him.

Therefore Jesus does not provide His own throne. His enemies provide His throne. Jesus does not carry His own throne. Any good ancient near eastern king worth his salt has someone else carry his throne, preferably with him sitting in it. But Jesus spares Simon of Cyrene that embarrassment when Simon carries the throne of the King for the King to the place of coronation, the place of enthronement, the place of the skull.

When a true king is enthroned there are people sitting at His right and at His left. When Jesus is enthroned there are two people who are enthroned with Him. One is sitting at His right and one is sitting at His left. Jesus has finally come into His glory.

The king does not submit to the will of his enemies. A true king makes sure that His own will prevails. A true king will not allow his enemies to enter into His court and stand before Him and push

their will on Him. A true king at court will make sure that His will prevails at the court. He will make sure that His will prevails over the will of His enemies.

So even when His enemies say things like "Save yourself," He ignores them. He will have His will done. Even when His enemies say things like, "Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross in order that we may see and believe," the king will not do it. It is the will of the king that He should die for His people. In the court of Jesus His will will prevail. None of His enemies will be able to impose their own will upon Him. They do not get their way when He hangs on the cross. He gets His way when He hangs upon the cross.

The will of Jesus is that He should suffer in your place. The will of Jesus is that He should suffer vicariously for you. The will of Jesus is that He should bear what you deserve because of your sins. The will of Jesus is that He should bear what you deserve for your sins so that you will not. He is doing this to save you from God's wrath and damnation.

In order to do that Jesus must suffer God's wrath and damnation. The ultimate damnation is God forsakenness. Hell is nothing other than being without God. In hell God does not answer prayer. He does not save from the everlasting death which you are enduring. In hell God leaves you to your own devices and will not save you from any of them. In hell God is not with you. He does not protect you. He does not preserve you. In hell there is only God forsakenness, decay, and death. In hell people are angry at God because He does not answer or speak to them. In hell they get what they deserve and they are surprised by it.

In order for Jesus to suffer God's damnation on your behalf God must forsake Him. And so God does. It is the will of the king that God forsake Him. It is the way for the king to become king in His kingdom. It is the way to atone for the sin of the whole world. It is the way to save every last person on earth from everlasting fire and damnation. It is the way to give everyone eternal peace and joy with God. It is the way to guarantee that forgiveness, that peace and that joy with God.

Once Jesus does this the whole world will owe Him a debt of thanks. He will be king not just of Israel, but of the whole world.

The king is becoming the king of His kingdom and so God forsakes Him. He will not even send Elijah back from heaven to help Him.

Ancient kings were also religious functionaries. Ancient kings were sons of their gods. Ancient kings were priests of their gods. Ancient kings established the worship of their kingdoms. They built shrines to their gods and tore down the shrines of competing Gods. Ancient kings had the authority to change the worship of their gods. One temple to a god could be torn down and another one built to the same god in a different location.

When Jesus holds court as King in His kingdom, He enemies testify that He had said that He would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Jesus was talking about something else when He said that, but He does have authority over God's temple in Jerusalem. Jesus is not the priest of some false God. He is the priest of the true and living God, His Father who is in heaven. As priest Jesus performs the sacrifice to complete all sacrifices. None others are necessary. You may make them, if you wish, but they are not necessary. You may be sacrificing a lamb well enough, but you would not be sacrificing the lamb that God designated. That lamb would be Jesus.

Therefore Jesus also has a say over the temple. Like the kings of Israel of old He had the authority to remodel the temple and repair it. Instead when Jesus holds court, He tears the curtain down in the temple. The curtain that was torn in the temple was the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the

rest of the world. The Holy of Holies was the place where God's presence resided on earth. The purpose of the curtain was to protect people from the presence of God on earth. If a person went behind the curtain who was not authorized God's holy presence put them to death. If an authorized person went behind the curtain even they had to have a blood sacrifice so that God's holy presence would not put them to death. Well, Jesus has made the perfect and ultimate blood sacrifice. God's wrath has been stilled by the death of Jesus. Your sins are all forgiven. You are therefore fitted to stand in the presence of the God who resides in the Holy of Holies. Since you are forgiven, His holiness will not put you to death. That renders the curtain in the temple moot. So when Jesus holds court in His kingdom He renovates the temple as did the kings of Israel from of old. Only when King Jesus renovates it He tears down the curtain. Since the curtain and the sacrifice were the features of the temple that made it relevant, it is no longer relevant. Jesus the King and the Priest now proposes a new place of worship, in His body.

The king can do this because he is the king. He has held His court. He has rendered His judgments. Even nature itself obeys this king when the sky grows dark. And unlike the kings of the earth who try to impose their will with varying degrees of success when this king sits on His throne, His entire will was accomplished.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.