

I.N.I.

Palm Sunday
April 13, 2014
John 18:33-37

In Christ Jesus, whose name is wondrous love, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Jesus is a king. No doubt about it. Almost from the beginning of His life on this earth, He was called a king. Remember the question of the Wise Men when they came from the East looking for Him? **WHERE IS HE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS?** they asked. Remember Nathanael's comment when Jesus called him as a disciple? **RABBI, YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD! YOU ARE THE KING OF ISRAEL!**, was his confession.

And today we are celebrating our Savior's triumphal parade into Jerusalem. **REJOICE GREATLY, O DAUGHTER OF ZION! SHOUT, O DAUGHTER OF JERUSALEM! 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.** There are also many other places in the Gospels where Jesus is called a king.

On Good Friday the term *king* was heard again and again. The Jews accused Jesus of being a king. Pilate asked Jesus whether He was a king. And Jesus did not deny or sidestep the question. Rather, He gave a clear answer, and in that answer we find His wondrous love for sinners.

Names of Wondrous Love—KING

I. The king they wanted

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS read the sign nailed to Jesus' cross. The Jewish leaders weren't happy at all with this sign. **DO NOT WRITE 'THE KING OF THE JEWS,' BUT THAT THIS MAN CLAIMED TO BE KING OF THE JEWS,** they protested. It wasn't that those religious leaders didn't want a king. They very much wanted the Messiah to be one. They wanted a king who would pat them on the back and tell them how holy they were. They had been looking for a king who would praise them for their self-righteous plans of building a stairway to heaven by keeping the laws God had given them and the ones they had added. They also wanted a king who would set them free from Roman oppression.

And when Jesus didn't, they rejected Him. When Jesus called them whitewashed hypocrites and poisonous vipers, that was the last straw, He had to go.

On Good Friday those arrogant, self-righteous religious leaders stood outside the judgment hall of this Gentile Governor, Pilate, not wanting to go in lest they defile themselves. Yet, at the same time, they were demanding the murder of a king who was innocent.

WE HAVE NO KING BUT CAESAR, those leaders told Pilate. Again, what hypocrisy! They had been waiting for a Messiah-King who would pry Rome's heavy boot off their necks. Their idea of a king was one who would marshal opposition against the hated Roman armies and lead their nation back to the glory days of King David. But when Jesus said **PAY YOUR TAXES--GIVE TO CAESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CAESARS,** they were not happy with Him and when He spoke of a heavenly kingdom where all people of all nations, Jew and Gentile, were invited to come, that was too much. So with unbelieving hearts they plugged their fingers into their ears and brought this "would-be king" to Pilate for execution.

The common people also had their ideas as to what kind of king Jesus should be. When He had filled their stomachs with miraculous fish and bread in the wilderness, 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 physical needs and satisfy all their earthly desires. They couldn't get beyond the earthly miracle to see its heavenly meaning. As a result they missed the King who was the Bread of Life for hungry sinners.

So today we need to ask ourselves: What kind of king do we want Jesus to be? Of course, we want our Lord and King to watch over us on this earth. We want and need a King who provides our daily bread and protects our daily breath. We turn to Him in prayer, asking Him to give us our daily bread and all that goes with it. And He does by wisely measuring and graciously

supplying all our daily needs.

Admit it though. Don't we at times want even more from our King? Don't we want Him to keep all problems, and all pains, and all sorrows, all trials and hard decisions away from us? Forgetting that He knows what's best for us, don't we expect from His hand skies that are always sunny and blue and paths that are always smooth? And when that's not the way life goes, what's our reaction? When illness strikes, friends and family disappoint, earthly goods dissolve, plans fail, dreams vanish, do we sometimes wonder, "Is this the King I want?" Even worse, do we sometimes begin to question our King's wondrous love for us?

II. The King we need

May Jesus graciously forgive us for the times we've questioned His kingship, His rule over our lives. May He send His Holy Spirit to show us again and again that He 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 SHOULD NOT BE DELIVERED TO THE JEWS; BUT NOW MY KINGDOM IS NOT FROM HERE.** Earthly rulers can map out how far their reign extends and make plans for its extension. Earthly rulers have armies at their disposal to enforce their will upon their subjects and to defend against opposition. Earthly kings can levy taxes and fill their coffers with the peoples' money. 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 and could do. Now Jesus, the King of wondrous love, was trying to tell him about a better kingdom from a far better place.

YOU SAY RIGHTLY THAT I AM A KING, Jesus said. **FOR THIS CAUSE I WAS BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE I HAVE COME INTO THE WORLD, THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH. EVERYONE WHO IS OF THE TRUTH HEARS MY VOICE.** Jesus was speaking not only to Pilate but to you and me. Listen closely to His blessed words. In wondrous love our heavenly King reaches out to us, wanting more than anything else to have us as citizens in His kingdom. Jesus is saying, *"I am your King. I don't want your land and your goods, your taxes and your sweat. I want your heart. I want to rule over your hearts with My love. I came to earth to pay for your sins with My precious blood. To make you Mine not with royal pomp and power but with the simple truths of salvation. Through the power of My Gospel, I want to live in you and I want you to live for Me. Finally, I want you with Me in heaven. This wonderful truth, this blessed truth that all who believe in Me shall not perish but have everlasting life, I came to prepare and to offer to all people through My perfect life, My sacrificial death and through My victorious resurrection. And when you have this truth, you have it all."*

ARE YOU A KING THEN? Pilate asked and heard Jesus' amazing answer. Unfortunately, Pilate didn't really listen. Instead of kneeling before the King of wondrous love, He handed Him over to be crucified on the cross.

Thank God you and I know better. By God's grace we can sing again this Lenten season, "Crown Him the Lord of love—behold His hands and side, rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified. No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight, but downward bends his wondering eye at mysteries so bright".

Thank God, you and I can raise eyes of faith to that matchless King and can confess in wondering love, "Jesus is my King!"

Our King has still more things waiting for us. Look where He has promised to take us—to His kingdom above where there will be no more sin or death. There He has perfect care waiting for us as His subjects, and perfect peace for our hearts as His soldiers. In that heavenly kingdom, we'll raise with all the saints who have gone before the hymn of praise, written by the Apostle Paul **NOW TO THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, TO GOD WHO ALONE IS WISE, BE HONOR AND GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.** (1 Tim. 1:17).

May our Heavenly Father keep our eyes of faith focused on our King of love until we praise Him together above.

Amen.