

Good Friday

"When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with [him], away with [him], crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar."

Will you have this Man to be your king?

That is the question put to you today -- even as it was the question to the gathered crowd on the first Good Friday.

For all of their lives they held that God alone is the King of Israel.

But now that it comes to it, how do they answer Pilate?

"We have no king but Caesar."

Mere hours before, they would not have dreamed of such an answer.

God in heaven, they thought, would ever be the king of their lives.

To say anything else would never have crossed their minds.

The only thing they meant to deny was that this *man* was God.

But, the more they denied Jesus, the more they were forced to deny God.

For, in the end, there simply can be no separation between the two.

And when we have observed this, we are now ready to look carefully in the mirror and ask the same question of ourselves.

Who's your king—Jesus or Caesar?

Words alone will prove little. But just like that first crowd, words, intentions and feelings were betrayed by actions.

So let us not merely hear of Christ's Passion but also consider well what it means.

For He bore all these things, in order that we might walk in His footsteps.

To hold this crucified Jesus as your King is to cast your lot fully with Him.

The mandate of Maundy Thursday still holds, "*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*"

If you are mocked as Jesus was you will swallow pride and suffer injustice, saying, "*The servant is not greater than his Lord*"

More than that, not only did Jesus bear these things, but even used every means to save his persecutors and slanderers.

Let us imitate Him also in this—love your enemies, and do good to those who spitefully use you.

When a man insults you, do not despise him, but pity him — understanding that he is in the devil's grasp and knows not what he does.

When someone ridicules you do not return insult for insult but consider sad plight of one so under the devil's sway that he does what no Christian should do.

And if you, tonight, recall that you yourself instigated or partook of such wicked living—tremble in holy fear at the sight of Him who was the brunt of such mockery and injustice.

For to act and think in this way is to throw in with the Jews and declare that you have no king but Ceasar.

What excuse will you give for such wickedness?

For you have been brought into God's kingdom, and deemed worthy to enter into God's house, and have been made partakers of Christ's body and blood.

And if you are no better and even worse than unbelievers, who have shared in none of these things, who then is your King?

For you have passed by laughing and jeering while Jesus died for you.

By your insatiable anger you have sought the blood of the innocent.

Even unbelievers will often risk their lives for the gods of this world—money fame and fortune.

Have you despised even as little as money for the sake of Christ?

Have you set aside anger on account of God's will? or do you prefer to wallow in wrath toward those who hurt you not desiring to be free of it?

As long as He remains invisible, transcendent and on high, He is tolerated—

But when this King enters your flesh and rules in humility, suffering and servitude toward your enemies, his people cry out, "*We have no King but Caesar.*"

Do not rush by the long-suffering of Christ as though He were no King that you would want to rule your life.

nor treat the Suffering of Christ as though it were only a necessary evil that He had to go through but not truly a part of His kingly activity.

But Pontius Pilate was right! This is Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

He is not merely biding His time on the cross so that He can be a King later. Right here, in the act of crucifixion He is reigning.

Therefore, His suffering and death was more than example—much more.

By His suffering and death He is a mighty King defeating the devil and all those in league with Him—including every earthly king.

Where He looks weakest and most ineffective, there He is strong to save.

When He cried, "*It is finished,*" the battle was over He conquered all your foes—foes of greed, envy, lust and hatred.

When you hear Him speak from His royal throne—the cross—you are invited to share in that victory.

And the words He speaks are words of forgiveness for those who nailed him there.

Just as His royal throne is the cross, so His royal decree is forgiveness.

Just as His crown is of thorns, so His posture toward you is long-suffering.

When you are washed in the bloody water that flowed from His side, you are reborn into His Kingdom.

When you drink from the blood that He shed, you eat of royal food.

The cross of calvary is not pure history for Jesus or for you.

For Jesus it remains the throne from which He rules His Church.

And His Church--His Kingdom--is ruled by forgiveness.

Rather than demanding to be served, He comes to serve.

Rather than considering His deity something to be grasped, He takes on the form of a servant and is obedient unto death.

And this is the kingdom that is given to you.

This is the One who is your King tonight through the cross of Jesus.

This is what you are given in Christ's preaching and Holy Sacraments.

Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews becomes your King as well.