

Streetsville United Church
Sunday, March 28, 2010
Rev. John Tapscott

"HERE IS OUR KING!"

John 19:14

On Palm Sunday we proclaim Jesus' Kingship which he demonstrated by symbolic action as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Later in the week he said it quite openly. When Pilate said to him, "you are a king, then!", Jesus replied, "You are right in saying that I am a king."

But here, right at the beginning of Holy Week, Jesus' Kingship was proclaimed by his disciples. As Jesus approached the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, the whole crowd of the disciples began to joyfully praise God. They cried out "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." (Luke 19:38) In other words, "Here is God's King, whom God has sent to rule over us." Many who lined the roadway and threw down their cloaks in his path were ready to accept him as King. But did they really know what kind of king Jesus was ?

In any event, not all residents of Jerusalem were so ready and willing to accept him as king. When Pilate tried to set Jesus free, the leaders kept saying, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." Pilate tried one last time, bringing Jesus out before the crowd. "Here is your king," he said. But they shouted, "Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered, ironically forgetting that God Himself was King of Israel. And Pilate, in order to protect his status as a friend of Caesar, and to prevent a riot, handed Jesus over to be crucified. The leaders and those who shouted, "Crucify him," rejected Jesus as God's King, violently.

But we have not rejected him. In fact, we change one word in Pilate's statement, "Here is your King." We say, "Here is our King." Jesus is our King. We sing, "Jesus, you are my King." He is king of our hearts. He is King of the church. He is the returning King whom God is sending again to rule over all creation and all peoples.

What I want to say today is this. As we proclaim Jesus' Kingship and live as his subjects, we must remember what kind of king He is. For to claim him as our King but then not to be shaped by his values would be almost as bad as rejecting him. "Here is our King!" we say. But what kind of king is Jesus? Let's answer that by looking at some scenes of Jesus' last earthly week and seeing the King in action.

First, here is our King bringing peace.

A king entering a city to make war would ride a white horse. But a king coming in peace rode a humble donkey. King Jesus was coming to bring peace to Jerusalem.

Jerusalem means "vision of peace." Sadly, Jesus knew his peace would be rejected. Luke 19:41 tells us that as Jesus drew near he wept over the city, saying, "If you, even you had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!" Jesus predicted that the city would be destroyed..."because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God."(V. 44)

Throughout Holy Week, we see Jesus the King bringing peace. He said to his disciples, "But now the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one." They said, "Lord, here are two swords." He replied, "It is enough." Later a crowd came to arrest Jesus. The disciples asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" Before Jesus could answer one struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. But Jesus said, "No more of this!" He touched his ear and healed him.

Now even if Jesus allowed those swords for basic defense they were not to be used aggressively. That's something to consider as Christians approach the issue of peace and warfare. Some defense is necessary in a fallen and broken and sinful world. But that defense must not be used aggressively or offensively. Jesus must still weep over our world as he says, "No more of this!" Now for certain he would be pleased as he sees former enemies living in peace. Think of Northern Ireland where bombings and terrorism have ended and Catholics and Protestants now live in peace. People on both sides realized that followers of Jesus could not live this way. Even the aggressors said, "No more of this!"

Jesus Christ is the King who brings peace to our world. By his own death and resurrection he brings us peace with God. He brings peace to our hearts. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," he said," not as the world gives do I give to you."

And we who proclaim "Here is our King" seek to be people of peace. We do not escalate conflicts, but try to diffuse them. Insofar as it depends on us, we live peaceably with all. We pray for peace on earth and good will among people. We look ahead to that glorious day when Christ will return to establish God's Kingdom of peace and justice. "Here is our King, the King who brings peace."

Secondly, here is our King serving.

On Thursday evening the shadow of Calvary was closing in on Jesus and the disciples. And would you believe it - the disciples were arguing among themselves as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom, who would get the important positions, who would sit on Jesus' right hand in glory. Well, we can believe it because they were human and we're human, and we know what goes on in the world. Then the king acted - John chapter 13, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, girded himself, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet." King Jesus was teaching his disciples that they were to have a servant's heart, a heart like his own.

It is so instructive for us today. We live in a society in which our worth is so often measured by our position, by how much money we acquire, and the size of house we own. But Jesus says, "Your life is not defined by what you get; but by the service you perform for others."

Albert Schweitzer was addressing the graduating class of a boys private school. And he looked at these young men, so full of privilege and ability, and he said to them, "I do not know what your destiny will be. Some of you will become great and famous. But I do know this - that the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

So we who proclaim and follow Jesus as King learn to think of ourselves as servants. No matter what our particular job may be, that's who we are, servants who walk in Jesus' footsteps serving God and serving humanity for Jesus' sake.

Thirdly, here is our King obeying.

Now the scene changes to the Garden of Gethsemane. It was late that Thursday evening and the Upper Room meal was over. Judas' betrayal had been fully fixed. And in the Garden Jesus wrestles in agony. Is the Cross the only way to save a fallen world? "Father, if be possible, let this cup pass from me." But then this - "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." The King obeyed the Father's will unto death, even death on a Cross.

The only thing that seems to motivate us today are feelings - if you feel like doing something - do it, and if you don't feel like it, don't do it. There's no sense of obedience or duty or obligation. But what if obedience and duty are good things. What if these are appropriate qualities for people who proclaim Jesus as King - obedience to God and His word, fulfilling our obligations to our spouse, our children, our community, our church? Do you think that Jesus felt like going to a Cross? Of course not, but he did it, in obedience. I don't know about you, but there's lots of times when I don't feel like doing something. But when I push through those feelings and do what I've committed myself to do, I'm glad I did. Here is our King obeying.

Fourthly here is our King forgiving.

As he was lifted up on the Cross, suffering, dying, almost incredibly, the King was praying for those who executed him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Now I'm not going to spend much time on this one for this is my text for Good Friday. But let me say this - we truly do not know what we are doing when we sin. Of course, we are responsible, but we never really grasp or foresee the full consequences of sin. There really is no such thing as a little sin.

But Jesus is still praying for us, "Father, forgive them." And the Father always hears and answers the prayers of his obedient Son. Through Jesus' death and intercession we are forgiven. And we who claim Jesus as King not only receive God's forgiveness through

him, we become infected with his loving, forgiving heart. Earlier I mentioned Northern Ireland. Here's an incident which helped to change people's hearts and bring peace to that land. More than a decade ago, a bomb exploded at a Remembrance Day service killing eleven people. Gordon Wilson lay under the rubble with his 20 year old daughter Marie, a nursing student, holding her hand as she died. Her last words were, "I love you, Daddy." A few days later Gordon Wilson publically forgave the bombers and prayed for them. His action changed the attitude of his town and eventually influenced the whole country. People said, "No more of this, all because one man caught the Spirit of the King who prayed, "Father, forgive them."

Finally, here is our King conquering.

What kind of a King was this - a King wearing a mock crown of thorns, bloodied and beaten, dying on a despised Cross? But this was not the end of the story. For on Easter Sunday, this Jesus was raised by his Father from the grave to be alive forevermore, vindicating all Jesus' claims, and saying to the world, "Here is your true King." All the powerful figures of that Holy week drama - the religious leaders, the Roman empire, Pilate, all swept away by the judgement of history. But Jesus, Risen and Alive, keeps building his church and his Kingdom. From every nation and from every race he draws people to himself, faithful followers who say, "Here is our King."

And if at times you become depressed by our world, if you wonder where's it all going to end, turn to the last book of the Bible, Revelation chapter 9. John has a vision of the Lamb of God, the crucified Christ. "On his robe and on his thigh he has a Name inscribed, 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords'" - that's the end of history, with Jesus as King over God's Kingdom, with all evil and wrong overturned, with peace at the last, and all God's people gathered around the throne. And that multitude includes you and me and all who claim Jesus as Lord and Saviour and King. And on this Palm Sunday we anticipate that glorious day and say join our voices with the disciples on the first Palm Sunday who cried out, " Blessed is the King who comes in the Name of the Lord."