

Date: November 23, 2025 (The Reign of Christ)

1. Texts: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Canticle 19; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43.
2. Subject: kingdom of Christ.
3. Topic: kingdom not of politics, but of sacrificial love and mercy.
4. Aim: inspire.
5. Proposition: "Jesus is king, but not like Pilate wanted him to be."

CHRIST THE KING

"The King of the Jews": that's what Pilate labelled Jesus, "The King of the Jews". This was a convenient reason for his execution, and it let Pilate off the hook. Of course he had to execute Jesus—he was the leader of a Jewish political rebellion against the emperor.

But even as he was being tortured to death, Jesus proved that his was not a political rebellion. Neither was he a king as Pilate understood the term. In fact, Jesus had already said so when he told Pilate,

My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."¹

Jesus was a king, but not as anyone in his day would have imagined.

Jesus' kingdom was not a political one, with power and influence in the day-to-day administration of his kingdom. His kingdom did not have armies, taxes or weapons. His kingdom was not of this world, and no one should think of his reign in such political terms.

The reading from Luke points to the heart and foundation of Jesus' kingdom. Sacrificial love, forgiveness, mercy and grace are the boundaries of his kingdom. Jesus is the Suffering Servant King, who extends God's love to all who are open to it.

Jesus once said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."² By God's own design, genuine love is sacrificial. Everyone

¹ John 18:36.

² John 15:13.

not willing to sacrifice for the other cannot love. Everyone who does love, must sacrifice.

Jesus demonstrated this in his willing sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

But he had already extended this concept of sacrificial love to his disciples: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."³ "...*as I have loved you.*" That is, in the same way that I have loved you. The disciples are to love one another with the same quality of sacrificial love Jesus was to show on that cross.

Sacrificial love is central to Christ's kingdom. This will always mean that suffering is equally central. Sacrifice means surrender. It means giving up and giving away. Sacrifice is costly. You lose something every time you sacrifice. Jesus demonstrated this in an extreme way on the cross, and it must still hold true for each of us today.

This essential love leads to the experience of forgiveness, mercy and grace. Jesus' relationship with the thief on the cross demonstrated this. Forgiveness, mercy and grace are outcomes of sacrificial love. As we love others with the love Christ showed us, his kingdom of forgiveness, mercy and grace is made real in our time and space.

Jesus was a king, but not the kind of political figure everyone in his day was looking for. His power and authority did not lie in men and arms. His power and authority lay in his ability to love sacrificially so that others might experience forgiveness, mercy and grace.

If we are to celebrate this fact from and about Jesus, then we have to find the means to love sacrificially. Theology without application is empty philosophy.

We've established the nature and foundations of Jesus' kingdom. We've established that his example is the model and pattern for every Christian disciple.

³ John 15:12.

This means that sacrificial love opening up to forgiveness, mercy and grace demonstrates that we are Christ's disciples.

Borrowing from *The Book of Alternative Services*, I will ask you three questions. If, you are able in good conscience to do so, please answer silently with "I do".

- Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your King? [Wait.]
- Do you put your whole trust in his love, forgiveness, mercy and grace? [Wait.]
- Do you promise to obey him as your Lord? [Wait.]

We have confirmed that we are Christ's disciples.

We have already established that Jesus delivered his command in words and actions. We accept his command to love one another as he has loved us. We choose to love others sacrificially.

Now, think of someone who is difficult for you to love. You see, it's quite easy to love sacrificially when you already care deeply for someone. It's much harder to love someone who aggravates you. Choose someone now to be the recipient of God's love through you.

Start your campaign of love by genuinely praying for this person. And not, "God, please correct them and make them better. Please demonstrate to them how wrong they are." That's not sacrificial love. We pray something like, "Lord, tear down the barriers to love in my life. Empower me to love as you would do." We pray that God might encourage and strengthen them. We pray that God might bring forgiveness into our hearts and mercy and grace into theirs.

With such a prayer campaign, you will have confirmed the foundations of Christ's kingdom in your own life. Then, look for an opening to share those foundations with the person for whom you have been praying. There might be a shared interest or a skill that the other person has from which you could benefit. The person might have a recipe you could use. You might ask for help. The goal will be to find something across which love, forgiveness, mercy and grace can flow.

Please note that the examples all put the other person in control and in the superior position. It's not, "Oh, let me help you with that because I'm naturally better at it than you." The examples place you in the position of being needy. It isn't called "sacrificial love" for nothing.

This is not easy. I would suggest that your campaign of sacrificial love not start with your arch enemy. Start with someone or even a group that you could imagine actually working with. Start easy and then work towards the more difficult goals. Just remember: you're starting from the point of sacrifice, not superiority. That sacrifice is born from love, not pride.

That sounds hard, I know. But when we look at the sacrifices Jesus made, our sacrificial love takes on its proper perspective. I think love becomes more possible.

But here's a very important realization. The more we love sacrificially, so that forgiveness, mercy and grace flow, the more we are living the life of Christ. The better we mimic Jesus, the more effectively we proclaim his gospel of salvation. As we love sacrificially, we serve as Jesus' hands, feet and voice—which is exactly what he intends for his disciples.

This is the way that Christ's kingdom is brought to earth—not through armies or weapons or politics. Christ is the King, but his kingdom is one of sacrificial love, overwhelming forgiveness, tangible mercy and soothing grace. This is the kingdom of which we are subjects and of which Christ is the Lord.

AMEN.