

Daily Discipleship

Christ the King Sunday (B) – John 18:33-37

Living in Christ: *Listen*

Focus Question: *How do you listen to the voice of Jesus?*

word of life

“Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” John 18:37 (NRSV)

Read John 18:33-37

The setting is Pilate’s headquarters in the early morning. The reader of the Gospel of John becomes acquainted with Pilate in the previous verses found in John 18:28-32. Take time to review that section. Pilate approaches the crowd to learn about their accusations towards Jesus. They accuse Jesus of being a criminal, but this confuses Pilate. If their accusations are true, then the Jews should be able to deal with such a criminal by their own laws. But the crowd wants Jesus to die, and they do not believe they can punish someone by putting him to death. Thus, they involve Pilate and request he condemn Jesus to death.

1. *What is your first impression of Pilate?*
2. *How would you describe the crowd?*

Pilate leaves the crowd to question Jesus alone. He is baffled and asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” (John 18:33 NRSV) Pilate seems to be pondering whether Jesus is a political threat, but Jesus does not give simple answers to Pilate. Jesus does not respond as a subordinate who is trying to please the person in power and authority. Instead, Jesus wants to know how Pilate comes to such a question. Has Pilate heard about him?

3. *Describe Jesus in this scene.*

There is no uncertainty. Pilate announces he is not a Jew and reminds Jesus of the accusations of his own people. Pilate’s question is straightforward, “What have you done?”

4. *What possible criminal activity has Jesus done?*
5. *If you were in a similar situation, would you try to defend yourself? How so?*

Jesus speaks of a kingdom, describing a royal reign not of this world. He uses human logic. If Jesus had a kingdom on earth, then he would own land and control an army who would battle on behalf of Jesus. The kingdom of Jesus is not like other kingdoms from this world. Pilate does not quite follow the teaching of Jesus. Pilate wants a direct reply and asks, “So you are a king?” Pilate seeks an answer of “yes” or “no.”

6. *What makes the words of Jesus so complex?*

Jesus gets more specific. He came into this world to establish a new kind of kingdom, but not everyone is open, ready, or interested. That does not prevent Jesus from pointing to the truth and continuing with his mission. Those who listen to Jesus are drawn to truth. Pilate interrupts him, “What is truth?” (John 18:38 NRSV)

7. *How would you answer the question, “What is truth?”*
8. *How would you describe the kingdom of Jesus?*

word among us

Traditionally the last Sunday of the church year is Christ the King Sunday. We sing triumphant hymns and adorn the altar with white. Many times, we try to lift up the theme of God's reign, but it is not unusual for this Sunday to get lost between the celebrations of Thanksgiving and the preparations for Christmas.

1. *What do you know about Christ the King Sunday?*
2. *Why end the church year with such a celebration?*
3. *How might a congregation celebrate Christ the King Sunday?*

Most of us have not lived in countries ruled by a monarchy. Many of us in the United States have had history lessons about living under a monarchy and the struggles to claim independence. We covet our freedoms and would not easily return to a time or place where a monarch ruled. Thus, it might be difficult to grasp the positive aspects of Christ as our king.

4. *What is your impression of living under the reign of royalty?*
5. *How would you describe the perfect ruler?*
6. *What can happen when humans get power?*

It is a major decision to give up one's independence and willingly choose to follow someone else, even Jesus. The temptation is to claim independence and not depend on anyone else. That is sin at work in us, drawing us from the goodness and love of God made known in Jesus Christ. Yet, at some point, we decide if Jesus is trustworthy.

7. *What evidence do you have to suggest Jesus is a worthy king?*
8. *Why trust in Jesus?*
9. *What benefits are experienced when we allow Jesus to rule our lives?*
10. *What makes it difficult for Jesus to rule?*

If we claim Jesus to rule our life, then it follows we are to listen to the one who wants to lead us. We seek ways to discern his will and not jump to our own devices. "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:37 NRSV) That is not an easy process. It becomes a daily struggle to follow Jesus and to allow him to truly lead us.

Yet, this is the task of daily discipleship. Each day, we commit our lives to following Jesus, accepting him as our teacher and savior. In the process, we are blessed by those with whom we share the journey of faith, the opportunities to witness to the love of Christ, and the joy of living connected to Christ.

11. *What does "Daily Discipleship" mean to you?*
12. *What do you hope you remember from this lesson?*

Prayer

Ruler of creation, rule our lives with your grace and your wisdom. Help us to follow you and be your disciples each day of our lives. Amen

Dig Deeper

Daniel 7:9-14

last word

Each morning, make the sign of the cross
on your forehead
and ask Jesus to rule your life today.



Daily Discipleship

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

Copyright © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the above copyright notice is included.

www.elca.org/evangelizingchurch/dailydiscipleship

Christ the King Sunday (B) Page 2 of 2