

## The Truth about Which Jesus Came to Testify

*Jesus said,*

*“For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.”*

My husband is very fond of the saying, “what is truth?”; which is the smarty pants response Pilate has for Jesus. Jesus, in his discourse with Pilate never once says: “I am a king.” What he does say is: “I came into the world to testify to the truth”. I think it is obvious in the exchange that Pilate was irritated and made that statement in a dismissive manner. But actually, I think it is worth asking: What is the truth that Jesus is talking about?

Taking a quote from Disney’s 1993 film *Homeward Bound*—sort of—Jesus is basically saying : “*God rules, Caesar drools!*”

Last year I heard a sermon in which the preacher stated that she did not recognize Christ the King Sunday because she doesn’t worship Jesus as a king. That somewhat unnerved me because Jesus has always been the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to me. So I was prompted to Google Christ the King Day.

It turns out that just one Hundred years ago, in 1925, in response to a growing movement away from the church and Christian faith, Pope Pius XI issued an encyclical proclaiming that the last Sunday in October would be known as *The Feast of Christ the King*. It was intended to combat the rise of secular rulers as sovereigns apart from God and Christ by reminding Christians that it is Jesus Christ who is Lord over all creation. Then, in 1969 Pope Paul VI moved the feast day to the last Sunday after Pentecost thinking that it was a more fitting way to end the liturgical year leading into Advent.

However, here is what Jesus had to say about that: “**You** say that I am a king.” Jesus did not want to be a king. In the Gospel book of John in chapter 6 we read the story of Jesus feeding of the five thousand. After they are satiated the crowd wants to force him to be king but he leaves by himself to get away from them.

All Jesus wanted was to bring people back to God. And all people wanted was another earthly king.

You can search but you will not find one story by the writers of the four Gospels where Jesus says: “*Oh I just can’t wait to be king!*” Nowhere.

The prophets of ancient times called out the abuse of earthly rulers. Samuel gave the Israelites a warning from God when they asked for a king. He told them that a king “will take what you have and you will become a slave to him one way or another.” Guess what? They wanted one anyway.

What really happens to people when they come under the rulership of humans as rulers? Theologian Walter Bruggeman suggests complacency.

In his book [The Prophetic Imagination](#) he refers to the “royal consciousness”; a term that means a body of people who become numb to reality and live as if the way things are is the way

they have always been and must always be. Over time people get used to the way things are and so come to accept the “status quo”.

Being conditioned to the status quo—to the “*royal consciousness*” is an eons old human affliction. In ancient times historical records show that the people in power did whatever was necessary to either maintain their status or, of course, improve it. Often peasants were overworked, overtaxed, and starving. They just accepted it.

Old Testament records tell us that even the nation of Israel almost from its inception was afflicted with greedy, power hungry kings and priests.

This is the world Jesus into which Jesus was born. A world dominated by rulers and religious leaders who only pretended to care for the people. The Jewish religious leaders were lying to and cheating the very people they were entrusted to care for.

So Jesus said: “*I came into the world to bear witness to the truth.*”

The truth was that the Jewish people had what might be called the “Stockholm Syndrome” (a condition in which the abused develops positive feelings for the abuser). The nation of Israel had been under foreign rule for so long that they had lost their identity as God’s holy chosen people and had allowed themselves to believe they had no choice but to obey their worldly rulers which was encouraged by the religious leaders who were ingratiating themselves with the Roman authorities. The faith in God’s love for them had dwindled to nothing more than keeping traditions—just going through the motions for the sake that they had always done it. Instead of looking to God, they were looking to the earthly rulers for their needs instead of to God. They just accepted that this was their lot and it wasn’t going to change.

With John the Baptist paving the way, Jesus started a grassroots opposition to the status quo. He organized a group of people who, though struggling, were still holding onto their faith. They helped him remind the Jewish people that it is God not the religious leaders, or any earthly king—namely Caesar—to whom they owed their love and worship. God is the one who gives life. God has not forgotten them—they had forgotten God. Whatever the religious leaders taught it seems the peasant people were fearful to question their authority and teachings.

Jesus was not. Jesus reminded the people that God was still with them. God had not abandoned them. He told them that there were only two laws that they needed to obey and they are not Caesar’s or the religious leader’s laws. They are God’s laws and if they obeyed them, they would have an abundant life no matter where they were or who was pompous and loud-mouthed enough to think they were ruler in the world.

Life comes from God, not from earthly leaders. But you know what? Only a small number of people accepted this truth.

The Gospel writer of Matthew was prompted to quote Jesus as saying:  
“*the gate is wide and easy that leads to destruction and there are many who take it; the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life and few are the ones who find it.*”

How disheartening that seems and yet being disheartened is not the way of Jesus, Son of God. He made sure his work of bringing the truth to the world would continue beyond his earthly life.

Two Thousand years later the same status quo exists in the world. The rulers of our world are not just people in the White House, or the Kremlin, or Parliament, or Knesset.

The rulers of this 21st century world are also propagandists who do all they can to get people to believe that what they need is more material things and more fun! The accumulation of wealth will bring happiness and security and peace. Perhaps paradoxically these propagandists have been drawn in by their own propaganda.

Just as with the Jews of the 1st century, Christians today are not immune to being drawn into the propaganda of the status quo. Some are looking to the secular government to provide for their needs and actually have a sense of entitlement and expectation. Some even have the view that people should be looking out for their own personal interest first. They should be pursuing their own happiness and not be concerned with that of anyone else—like the Jewish priests.

Accepting the status quo does not fit in with God's way of love. Looking only to our interests does not fit with God's way of love and both are counter to the teachings of Jesus.

Every Sunday and often at other times during the week we recite a prayer that many of us learned when we were children in Sunday School.

The Lord's Prayer. This is the Good News Prayer. It is the Creed and Promise of the kingdom of which Jesus spoke in his rebuke of Pilate when he said: "*my kingdom is no part of this world.*".

Jesus drew the line with Pilate. "*I am not a ruler like you or any other worldly ruler*".

Jesus did not sit on a throne wearing fine garments in a magnificent temple or palace making grand pronouncements.

He went to the poor, the sick, and the broken and gave them healing, love, and hope. Jesus taught his followers to serve not to be served.

This is how the kingdom he came from works. This is how he brought it with him. This is how he invites others in. The kingdom Jesus comes from is grassroots, down in the trenches way of living in harmony with all people and all creation.

In the kingdom Jesus comes from, there are only two rules:

- 1) Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength.
- 2) Love your neighbor as yourself.

No one is lord or king—that title belongs to God.

In the kingdom Jesus comes from the people care for one another. No one goes hungry, no one is unclothed, no one goes without shelter, no one is denied health, no one is denied love and compassion." **No one.**

Today, what we are honoring is *not* Christ the King "from a human point of view"—to quote the Apostle Paul. We are honoring Christ the loving, liberating, life giving Jesus whose death was the period at the end of the sentence of human bondage and whose resurrection was the beginning of the never-ending story of freedom for all people to be: subject only to a loving God who is creator and provider of all things necessary for a full and vibrant life; liberated from the encumbrance of life tied to a system that oppresses and depresses; given a life of joy in the love

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of family, friends, community. And to love and to serve all people united with one another and all of creation.

And every eye in all the earth will see and know that this Jesus who was crucified because he did *not* bow to the powers of this world, died, was buried, and rose from the dead because God validated the truth that Jesus came into the world to testify to and made him Lord over all things. Thank be to God!