

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
November 24, 2019

“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” (Luke 23:42)

Today, our Church celebrates the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (Christ the King). In our reflection, I considered, if the Church were to rename this Solemnity, would that change our understanding? If we were celebrating the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, Ultimate Life Coach or Jesus Christ, Great Philosopher or Jesus Christ, Defender of the Environment or Jesus Christ, Social Justice Warrior, or Jesus Christ, Defender of Migrants, or even Jesus Christ, Supreme Counselor; would any of these titles change the way we view Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? I would propose the answer - NO. To justify this answer, I would like you to consider the way we have presented Jesus over these past two generations. Recently, we have witnessed Church leaders discuss humanity's impact on the environment and the world's treatment of migrants just to name two. I understand these issues are important and a clear, concise statement addressing these is needed. My question is not centered upon these issues. Rather, do we still have a proper understanding of what the title King of the Universe means when we refer to Our Lord Jesus Christ as we do this day?

The Gospel of Saint John can offer us an insight as to the way “*King*” was understood through the conversation between Pilate and Jesus. Pilate asked, “*Are you the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?’*” (John 18:33-34). A question is followed by a counter question. For Pilate, his question would center upon a secular-political understanding of the word king. A king would naturally be viewed as an opposition leader to Roman rule, to Caesar himself, and would require an immediate sentence of death. It would be better to squash this usurper and his lot before rebellion would take hold and a prolonged war be waged. Yet, Jesus responds in a most intriguing way by inquiring if Pilate had heard of him. Jesus wanted to assure him that this fear would not become a reality. Jesus could have easily responded that He was not a king, or a king in the mold cast by the religious leaders of His day. He was not the “king” they wanted. Rather, He was a maverick, an idealist who offered ethical demands to His followers without putting forward any political prerequisites. What good were His miracles? He could heal the sick and feed multitudes, but how would those things assist in overthrowing their Roman overlords?

Jesus would define His understanding of His kingship later in the conversation as He responded to Pilate, “*My kingdom does not belong to this world.*” (John 18:36). As important as world issues can become, the kingdom of Jesus is not of this world nor dependent upon this world. For any king, the world and current events, are both the starting point and destination of their focus. They must reflect, decide, and act upon issues which will affect the daily lives of their subjects. Their focus must be of this world. For Jesus, the world is just the beginning of the journey. His edicts for His subjects consist in the reaffirmation of His Father's commands: Love God, Love Others. It is these two which allow His subjects to live in this world as free subjects assisting each other as they transform their own lives on the journey. His kingdom is our goal and destination. During the time we have been given, we will not be able to lift the world's poor out of poverty. We may not be able help each person who arrives at our front door. But, by daily striving to live a life worthy of Christ's Kingdom, we can make a difference in our lives and the lives of so many around us.