

*Because I don't draw a line between my religion and politics...*

## **“Not from Here”**

Pastor Barb Edema, Bridge Pastor

Sunday, November 25, 2018

**Christ the King Sunday**

John 18:33-37

*No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love. For love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.*

### **Nelson Mandela**

With our current political climate, you may ask why the title of this sermon isn't, "Testify to the Truth" Instead of "Not from Here." I recently read someone's concern that our country is being desensitized by the lies our President tells on a daily basis. A fear that we are worn down or worn out by the barrage of falsehoods and fantastical fiction that emanate from a man who fears the truth which is chasing after him each and every second. Truth that will catch him in the end.

"The truth shall set you free," Jesus said. The truth will set us free. Truth will set our country free.

In our Gospel today, Jesus is on trial. He has done nothing wrong except bring truth and hope and redemption to a very broken world. The Jewish leaders are threatened. They are afraid of the one who says their laws and their ways of conducting life and law are done. There is a new King in town. The Messiah they won't accept.

I don't have a problem with the language of "king." Some people don't like the male language. Obviously, all the kings we have ever known are males. There have been good human kings and disastrous human kings. It would be foolish to compare Jesus Christ to an earthly king. He is the perfect King from the halls of heaven. We can't begin to comprehend what this means. We only have imperfect words and images.

He is the Shepherd King. The forgiving King. The King of the heavens and earth. The Servant King. The King of Glory. The King of ultimate love. The King of salvation.

The King who knows a sheep from a goat.

Jesus is not the Messiah anticipated by the forever watching and waiting Israelites. He is not riding in on his trusty steed to turn the Roman Empire upside down. He is turning the entire way of life upside down. "Blessed are you if you are poor, mourning, hungering for righteousness, meek, persecuted..."

Jesus the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is healing the ones who bleed, who are sightless, who are voiceless, who are hopeless.

Jesus Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords speaks the truth to power. Tells those who are cheating the poor out of their pittance that they have to go! Those in the synagogue who wield power over the powerless will soon find themselves out of a job.

Because Jesus Christ is the King of the World, there is no singular group of people he came to save. He came for everyone. He is the King of every nation and every tribe. Every race, color, and religion.

Right now, there is a caravan of people seeking hope in our land that has plenty of room and plenty of promise. At least we used to.

Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords is walking in the midst of the caravan from Central America. He is walking with the young men who grow weary. He is walking with the mothers who can't carry their babies another step. He is walking with the old, the infirm, the sick, the fearful, the desperate.

There are those in this country who did not need a feast three days ago. They have more food than necessary but won't share a bite with the starving. There are those who believe their bank accounts will protect them from everything, even death. Yet, they won't share a dime with the poor. There are those who spew hatred, lies, threats, violence, and other vileness. They won't lift a finger to help someone in need.

They certainly cannot claim to know Jesus Christ. They have no clue who he is or what he stands for. Everything they do and say is anti-Christ.

In our Gospel Jesus is on trial. He has done nothing but change the world for good. Pilate is unaware of who he is talking to. He only knows what the Pharisees and leaders have told him. Pilate has to decide whether he should let this innocent man go or keep the Jews from unrest by killing Jesus.

“So, you are a king?” Pilate asks.

“You say that I am a king...but as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”

No, his kingdom is not from here. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is the place where there are no more wars or rumor of wars. Where there is no more suffering. Where there is no hunger or thirst. Where there is no hatred, racism, or bigotry because we are all one race, the human race. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is where love is learned and lived because it “comes more naturally to the human heart.”

How surprised some people might be when they get to heaven and find themselves serving those they have ridiculed, attacked, or derided on this earth.

Because the Kingdom of God is not from here. Not from this place where a man, the leader of our country, is so full of insecurity, small intellect, and zero empathy. A man with a bloated body and an ugly little soul. A man who would have a mother and child killed on the border or a young man beaten, or a baby caged like an animal. A man who doesn't care if men of color are shot down in the streets of our cities. A man who wants to take away human rights – keeping people from being who they really are. A man intent on destroying climate and creation. Stealing from the poor and sowing hatred. No, these things are not Kingdom Living. These things are the lashings of hell.

When there is a president who is so anti-Jesus Christ, there is only one hope until he is taken away.

We are. We are the hope in the name of Jesus Christ. We are the ones who will teach love to those who have been taught to hate. We are the ones who share the food, the money, the time, the conversation, the love of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. We are the ones who follow in his footsteps, we carry his glory and grace to the world, we tell the stories of the Kingdom of the Good Man. Where there is no more pain, or tears, or despair, or prejudice, or bigotry, or cruelty. Our lives must be lived in doing all the good we can until that day when we are welcomed into the Kingdom-not-from-here.

But the Kingdom-not-from-here is actually HERE now. The Kingdom into which we have been saved. He saved us even though he was falsely accused, horribly beaten, and crucified on a cross. A King who rose from the dead.

A King who can tell the difference between a sheep and a goat.

He is the King of Glory. His Kingdom is here. His Kingdom is now. It is where we dwell. Right here. There is much work to do. There are people to feed. People to welcome. People to find homes for. People to protect. There is healing to share and love to teach. There is so much to bring in the name of the King.

Amen.