

## ***What Would Jesus Do?***

John 18:33-37

This is the Sunday in the lectionary when we celebrate Christ as king. Our Gospel lesson has Jesus appearing before Pilate, the Roman governor, after having been accused by his enemies of trying to establish himself as king. In the dialog that follows, Jesus admits to being a king, but says that his kingdom is not of this world.

As I was reflecting on this text, I asked myself, What does it mean to be a King? Is Jesus really a king? In what way is Jesus a king?

Those questions caused me to reflect on what I know about kings, which isn't much. Being a king today, or a queen for that matter, doesn't mean what it used to. Queen Elizabeth certainly enjoys a privileged life, with castles and servants and money. Before she boards an airplane, you can bet that she doesn't remove her shoes before walking through the electronic arch that buzzes if you leave your keys in your pocket. Queens and kings travel by private plane, or by Rolls, or Bentley, or Mercedes. They have servants who send instructions to those who would host them: the king prefers this brand of bottled water; the queen prefers this kind of mattress. That sort of thing!

But the kings and queens of history enjoyed even greater power. A king typically had the power of life and death over people within his realm. Kings lived in grand palaces and commanded imposing armies. That doesn't sound much like Jesus, does it?

Jesus didn't live in a palace. As he told one would-be follower: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20) He didn't have lots of money. His "army" consisted of very ordinary people who brought the family to see the visiting teacher. It would be pretty hard to imagine those moms and dads and kids as any kind of threat to Rome.

But Pilate couldn't take a chance. People, high-level people, had reported Jesus as an enemy of Rome. He was a man who declared himself a king and was a potential challenger to the emperor. Pilate had no choice but to get to the bottom of such a charge. If he ignored it and trouble broke out, it would be Pilate's head on the chopping block.

So Pilate took time to interview Jesus, to talk with him one on one. He took Jesus aside so the crowd couldn't interfere, and he asked three questions:

First, he asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" That was exactly the right question for him to ask. If Jesus was trying to set himself up as a king, Pilate needed to stop him. Pilate didn't dance around the issue, he got right to the heart of the matter: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Seeing an ordinary-looking man, it must have been hard to imagine that he was a king of anything.

Second, Pilate noted that some important people had reported Jesus as a trouble maker. He asked, "What is it you have done?" Jesus had powerful enemies who had asked Pilate to crucify Jesus. But Pilate didn't exactly understand what was going on. He held the power of life or

Korean United Methodist Church at San Antonio  
Sermon by Tom White

death over Jesus, and he took that power seriously. He didn't want to condemn an innocent man just to settle a Jewish dispute. Jesus must have done something to cause all this trouble. So Pilate asked, "What is it you have done?"

Finally, Pilate asked, "You are a king then?" Jesus had said that his kingdom was not from this world, so apparently he saw himself as a king. So Pilate asked, "You are a king then?"

We know the rest of the story, of course. Pilate eventually, in frustration, washed his hands of the matter and allowed Jesus to be condemned. He didn't make it happen, but he allowed it to happen. But Pilate wasn't a fool. He knew that he was being used, and he didn't like it. He had his soldiers nail a plaque to the cross that said, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It was his way of sticking his finger in their eye. Jesus' enemies said, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that, 'This man claimed to be king of the Jews.'" But Pilate responded, "What I have written I have written."

Was Jesus a king? That was the question that Pilate needed to answer. Is Jesus a king? That is the question that we need to answer. What would it mean if Jesus were king? How would it affect our lives?

The New Testament certainly sees Jesus as a king. It calls him "King of kings and Lord of lords." (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16) Paul talks about Jesus as coming down from heaven to be born as a baby and to die on a cross. Then Paul says, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11) That certainly sounds king-like, doesn't it!

Let me ask whether Jesus is king in your life. You don't have to hold up your hand and give the answer in front of everyone, but I would like for you to think about the question, is Jesus king in your life?

Then let me ask another question, if Jesus were king in your life, what difference would that make? What difference would it make for you? What difference would it make for your family? For your friends? For your employer? Think about that for a moment. What difference would it make if Jesus were king in your life?

Then let me make this observation. The way to tell whether Jesus is king in your life is to ask whether you are trying to do what he wants you to do. None of us is doing that perfectly, certainly not me. None of us is perfectly obedient to Christ, certainly not me. The question isn't whether we are obeying Jesus perfectly. It is whether we are trying, whether we are giving Jesus our best.

A few years ago, it was popular for people to wear bracelets that said WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) The idea behind the bracelets was to remind us, when faced with a decision, any decision, to ask, "What would Jesus do?" We would then let the answer help us to make the right decision, to help us do what Jesus would have us do.

Korean United Methodist Church at San Antonio  
Sermon by Tom White

What would Jesus do? How would he spend your money? Billy Graham commented, "Tell me what you think about money, and I can tell you what you think about God, for these two are closely related. A (person's) heart is closer to (his or her) wallet than almost anything else." That's true, isn't it! Most of us think that we don't have enough money. We might have fewer financial struggles, though, if we would ask, "What would Jesus do?" before deciding how to earn our money and how to spend it.

What would Jesus do? How would he have you spend your life? I'm not suggesting that Jesus would have everyone to become a preacher. Hardly! But I am suggesting that some vocations serve human needs better than others. As you know, I'm retiring from the Army in early 2007 and am actively looking for a job. There are a number of jobs, legal jobs, which undermine lives rather than building them up. They hurt people instead of helping them. I couldn't take one of those jobs. I couldn't be a bartender. I couldn't deal cards in a casino. I couldn't work for a dishonest company. The reason is simply that Jesus has something better for me to do. He has something better for you to do. He has something better for each one of us to do.

What would Jesus do? How would he have you spend your retirement years? I noticed recently that Andrew Grove, one of the founders of Intel Corporation, is using his retirement years to try to reform health care in America, especially health care for the poor. That really surprised me! Andy Grove is one of the richest people in the world. He has plenty of accomplishments to his credit! He could sit back and relax. He could spend his latter years playing golf. Instead, he is trying to solve the problem of uninsured people, some of whom are jamming emergency rooms and the rest of whom are getting no medical care. I think that's wonderful! I think that it's great that this rich man is spending his retirement years giving instead of taking.

I don't suppose there is any person in this congregation, who can do what Andy Grove is doing, who can tackle problems of that scope. But I'm sure that every person has something to give, something that will help people. We couldn't operate this church without these great people, and I'm not just talking about finances. These folks do all sorts of things to help this congregation. I can see them working in our community as well. Many of our members are asking, "What would Jesus do?" and they are letting the answer to that question shape their lives. I salute them!

What would Jesus do? Today, after we leave this church building and scatter throughout the community, each of us will be faced with decisions that will give us a chance to ask that question. It will give us a chance to ask, "What would Jesus do?" Asking that question is the first step toward making Jesus king in our lives.

If you are wondering how to get your life into focus, ask that question, "What would Jesus do?" and let the answer set the direction for your life.