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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
February 28, 2016
3rd Sunday in Lent

Lessons: Isaiah 53:7-9 Passion Jesus Betrayed and Arrested

Hymns: 361; 367; 394; 37; (798:3, 4)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 18:36

“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: “Jesus said.”

On these Sundays in Lent we are centering our meditations not upon sermons that Jesus taught during

holy week, but simply on a few of the short statements that He made in the last hours before His death. It is eye opening for us to consider the significance of these short statements of our Lord. When Jesus speaks we need to listen. When Jesus spoke, especially in these closing hours before His death, we need to pay special attention. He did not speak a great deal. He spoke infrequently in the hours of His Passion. He spoke briefly when He did speak. He delivered tremendously important messages that open for us a proper understanding of His sufferings and death.

This morning our text takes us to Pilate's court where the interrogation turned to the subject of --

THEME: The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. A Kingdom NOT of this World

It was actually the chief priests that brought up the subject of Jesus being a king in their accusations against Him.

Luke 23:1-3 Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. ² And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

³ Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

Jesus responded to this statement with the words of our text. Jesus began by saying, '**My kingdom is not of this world.**' Jesus did not deny being a King. Indeed that is an essential truth to our salvation. Jesus, as the Promised descendent of King David, was the "**King of kings and**

Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). Pilate picked up on what Jesus was saying immediately. Pilate responded, **“You are a king then!”** Jesus made it clear that this was why He had come into the world, **to bear witness to the truth**” (John 18:37). The truth of the gospel is found in Jesus being that King who was to come into the world that we might have life in His name. Jesus told Pilate, **“Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”**(John 18:37).

The world has had many kings, and all kinds of world leaders who have promised a better life for their people. The manner in which they attempted to fulfill that varied. Sometimes it was by giving the citizens the circus, the arena. To a degree we see that in our nation’s leaders yet today as they pour millions and even billions into sports arenas and sell false hope to people with their lottery sales. Other kings of this world have made imperialistic land grabs from their neighbors, seizing the wealth of others to enrich their own nation and people. Other kingdoms of this world have entered trade agreements, or initiated social programs, or promoted education, built up national defenses to make the people secure. Some kings or rulers don’t even try. They are simply tyrants or despots seeking their own glory and wealth. These are the ways, good or bad, of the kings of this world. It always has to do with the material and the temporal. This is true for their goals as well as their methods.

Jesus’ kingdom was NOT of this world. Jesus’ life was not simply about the physical, the material, the temporary. Jesus came that we might **have life and that we might have it more abundantly** (John 10:10). Jesus had not come into the world to unseat Caesar. He didn’t need to come into the world to do that. That He could

have done from heaven, just as He has done before and since with the rulers of this age. Jesus came to fight far more evil enemies, far more powerful enemies, far more cunning enemies than temporal kings. Jesus came into the world to oppose the tyranny of the devil, the spiritual tyranny that leads us to destruction, and the fear of death.

It was necessary for Jesus to take on our flesh and blood that He might fight our battles in the spiritual realms, for Jesus kingdom is a --

II. A Kingdom of Grace.

In our text Jesus said: **“If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews.”**

His was not a military power, however that does not mean that Jesus wasn't engaged in battle. Jesus as King was the Champion of the people who actively defended His people against their enemies. Jesus was engaged in mortal combat with the old evil foe, the devil. It was all as the Lord had prophesied right away in the Garden of Eden. God's Son would come as the Seed of the woman and He would crush the serpent's heads. However this victory would be costly; the serpent would bruise His heel. Jesus would give His soul into death. Jesus would deliver His spirit into the hands of His Father in heaven. Jesus, who is always both true God and true Man, died that He might deliver us from death.

His servant's did not fight to deliver Him from the hands of the Jews. Jesus didn't possess a band of soldiers, or a revolutionary guard. Jesus didn't summon the 12 legions of angels which could have been at His disposal to defeat

the armed band that came out to Gethsemane to capture Him. No, that was not the Lord's way. His kingdom was not of this world.

The nature of Jesus' kingdom is spiritual. He rules not with might of arms, not with fear and tyranny, but with truth and grace. He came in love, and still comes to us in His love and grace. He fills our heart with the peace of sins forgiven, that we might know no fear with God. Then with that grace He directs us to live in like manner. He directs us in love and kindness toward our neighbor that we serve God in all our ways. This is the rule of Jesus within us, for that is exactly where the Kingdom of our Lord is to be found, in the hearts of believers everywhere.

III. The Kingdom of Heaven.

In our text Jesus said: **“Now My kingdom is not from here.”**

Jesus directs our eyes upward to heaven that we might understand the true nature of His kingdom. So much of our lives are spent looking down. So much of our lives are directed to securing the things of this world, necessities of life to be sure, and it is equally true that the Lord grants us both the abilities and opportunities to secure these things for our good and blessing. However, the world is so attached to the material that it rules their hearts and directs their lives.

It is so important for us to understand that Jesus rules the world, but He rules this world from heaven above. He rules this world to direct the affairs of this world, whether it be the affairs of nations, or the affairs of our individual

lives, toward one ultimate and blessed goal, that we be received to Himself in heaven.

As we are reminded that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, we are reminded that this world is not our homeland either. Heaven is our home. Here we are but strangers and pilgrims. We are the people of God, **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God** (Ephesians 2:9).

This is what Jesus came to this earth to achieve, even our eternal salvation. This remains His greatest desire for us, and He shall bring it to pass, for He is our Almighty and eternal King, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Finally, the truth wins out. Yes, they crucified our Lord, the King, but His enemies were confronted with the truth of His identity, the truth of His Kingly office. When Pilate wrote the accusation for which this condemned man was being put to death in wrote out it out in Latin, Greek and Aramaic so that all who passed by would read and know that this Man was "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19)!

And so it stands to this day. We glorify Jesus as our King, as the One who led the charge against the enemy of our souls, and crushed the serpent's head. He led the charge and He freed us from the prison house of eternal death and hell. We owe Him our complete allegiance, for this is Christ, our King, the Lord of our lives. Praise His glorious name!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)