

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**Christ Is King!**  
**Luke 23:33-43: November 23 & 24, 2013**  
**Pastor Rick Fossum**

Did you know that today is called 'Christ the King' Sunday? 'Christ the King' Sunday always falls on the last Sunday of the Christian year. Next Sunday, December 1, is the beginning of a new Christian year or the first Sunday of Advent. And so today, we celebrate 'Christ the King' Sunday. I hope he's your king.

Do you know much about kings? Dr. Seuss has a story about Yertle, the Turtle King. Take a listen:

*On the far-away island of Sala-ma-Sond,  
Yertle the Turtle was king of the pond.  
A nice little pond. It was clean. It was neat.  
The water was warm. There was plenty to eat.  
The turtles had everything turtles might need.  
And they were all happy. Quite happy indeed.  
They were... until Yertle, the king of them all,  
Decided the kingdom he ruled was too small.*

*Yertle the Turtle King, lifted his hand  
And Yertle, the Turtle King, gave a command.  
He ordered nine turtles to swim to his stone  
And, using these turtles, he built a new throne.  
He made each turtle stand on another one's back  
And he piled them all up in a nine-turtle stack.  
And then Yertle climbed up. He sat down on the pile.  
What a wonderful view! He could see 'most a mile!*

*"All mine!" Yertle cried. "Oh, the things I now rule!  
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!  
I'm the king of a house! And, what's more, beyond that  
I'm the king of a blueberry bush and a cat!  
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!  
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"*

In my humble opinion, this is one of Dr. Seuss' masterpieces. The story goes on. Yertle, the Turtle King decides that his kingdom is not high enough or big enough. So, he adds more turtles to his perch or throne, at least 200 more. Now, he can see for forty miles. Yet, Yertle, the Turtle King, still wants more. Kings always want a little more. He orders 5,067 more turtles to come to his throne and he stacks them one on top of the other until they reach all the way to heaven.

This is what kings do, right? Kings sit on thrones and rule people. Kings wear crowns and fancy robes. Kings are the most important and most powerful people in the kingdom. Everybody serves the king. Everybody wants the king to be happy. In fact, it's everybody's best interest for the king to be happy because like someone once said, **"if the king ain't happy, nobody's happy."**

Jesus was a king. Did you know that? He even had a sign that said, “**Jesus, King of the Jews.**” He was a bit different than Yertle, the Turtle King or most other kings for that matter.

Jesus didn't have a royal throne to sit on or fancy robes to wear. He didn't own a crown or live in a palace. Jesus was a different kind of king.

In a way, Jesus, the King, was an answer to prayer. For years and years, the Hebrew people, God's people of Old Testament, had prayed for a king. Their requirements were simple. They wanted a regular, everyday, ordinary, variety kind of king. They wanted a strong king. They wanted a powerful king. They wanted a king who would sit on a throne and rule the world. They wanted a king to lead a mighty army and make their tiny little nation into a great and powerful empire. They wanted that kind of king.

From the beginning, Jesus wasn't that kind of king. He never was. He was different. He didn't have a kingdom to rule. His throne was the nearest tree stump or rock. His subjects were mostly farmers and fishermen. Sometimes, they'd listened to him and sometimes they wouldn't. Jesus didn't have an army to command not even a small one. He was a king, but different.

In our Scripture lesson today, Jesus doesn't act or look like much of a king. We see Jesus hanging from a cross at a place the locals called *'The Skull'*. If you look closer, you'll see three men. They've all been nailed to crosses and on those crosses, each one will suffer and die. Two of the men are criminals. They hang on either side of Jesus.

This isn't very king-like, is it? I mean, a king hanging from a cross? Really? But, Jesus didn't complain. He didn't curse or cuss those who had nailed him to the cross. He didn't demand revenge even though I suppose he could have called on God's angels to make life miserable for those who crucified him.

A lot of people were watching Jesus that day, but they didn't treat him like a king. They were there to watch him die. If you look around our scripture lesson some more, you'll see Roman soldiers and they're gambling for his clothes. They mock Jesus, the king as they gamble.

You'll see religious leaders, the leaders of the Jewish faith and the ones who lied about Jesus during his trial. They're making fun of him. They're glad Jesus is hanging from that cross.

And one of the criminals, as he hung from his cross, teases Jesus, the king, “**Hey look, you claim to be a king. Then do something! Get us down from here.**”

And even his own followers, those who were closest to Jesus, Peter and Andrew, James and John and all the others, deserted Jesus as he hung from his cross. They were supposed to be the ones Jesus could count on when life got rough. They were the ones Jesus hand-picked to follow him, but they deserted Jesus when he needed them the most.

So you see, although Jesus was a king, he was different than most other kings.

He was always different. It was almost funny, but he did most things backwards. He didn't fast when he was supposed to fast. He worked when he wasn't supposed to work. People accused him of hanging around with the wrong crowd. He forgave the unforgivable and he loved the unlovable. He never had much money or a palace to call home.

And even the things he taught his followers and the things he believed in most, were backwards or different from most other kings. He taught his followers that it's better to serve people than to be served. He taught them to love their enemies. He taught them to turn the other cheek if someone hit them; to give up their coats if someone needed them more. He taught them to do unto others as they want others to do unto them.

He wasn't very king-like, was he? And when they hung him from the cross that day, he did something else that wasn't very king-like. He prayed. He asked God to forgive those who crucified him. He even asked God to forgive one of the criminals who was hanging next to him.

This was Jesus. He was a king all right, but he was more than a king. His power and his authority didn't come from people or from golden thrones and crowns or from mighty armies. His power and authority came from God and God alone.

He ruled over 2,000 years ago and he still rules today. His kingdom is all around us and it's in us and over us and under us and through us.

On this '*Christ the King*' Sunday, our only question is this: Is Jesus our King? Will we follow Jesus, the King?

As you come forward for communion today, I invite you, in your own way, to make Jesus your King.