

Pastor Kenneth Mars

St. John's Lutheran Church – Kimball, NE

Lent V – Midweek (members of Immanuel, Burns also present)

April 9, 2014

Text: Philippians 2:5–11; Matthew 27:35–44

The King on the Cross<sup>1</sup>

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

The people of OT Israel cried out to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, “Give us a king just like the nations of the world. Give us a king, O Lord, who will lead us in battle and save us from our enemies.” It was a pivotal turning point in the history of God's people. Before that time, God Himself had been their King. But they wanted something different, not being content with God's works and ways.

So the Lord gave them a king, Saul of Tarsus. And what a king! He was handsome, strong, a full head taller than anyone else in Israel, and from a wealthy family. He had the perfect pedigree. After one glance, you would have known that's a king!

But Saul's rise to regal glory is a tragic one for he followed in the way of pride and ambition that led to his ignominious death. Because he rejected God and did not obey His will, God rejected Saul from being king over Israel. And so, God anointed a new king, a man after God's own heart, the young shepherd David.

David didn't look the part. He was handsome but not particularly tall. He was the youngest in the family, the runt so to speak, and was relegated to taking care of the sheep while big brothers took care of the weightier, more significant things. When Samuel went to anoint the Israel's next king, the Lord warned him not to look on the outward appearance of man. God was interested in the heart. Humble David from a lowly family was chosen and anointed to be Israel's next king.

But Saul is still alive and it wouldn't take long for his raging jealousy and paranoia to single David out. Although David served Saul faithfully, Saul became jealous of David's popularity among the people. He wanted to kill David and tried to do so on numerous occasions. In the end, King Saul, the once exalted King of Israel, was cut down in battle with the Philistines and beheaded in disgrace.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the sermon Series “The Crucified King” published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 2014.

Contrast King Saul with King Jesus, the son of David, as He is crucified and reviled on Calvary's hill. That bloodthirsty crowd mocks God's King, the one chosen by the Father. What vitriolic hatred is hurled at the Lord's Anointed. The passersby wag their heads at Him and revile Him. The envious chief priests, scribes, and elders chide Jesus by saying, "Prove your kingship by coming down off the cross. Then we'll believe you!" Even the two robbers direct their insults at Jesus.

It's too easy for us to point our fingers at that bloodthirsty mob and think we wouldn't have done that. Haven't we at times unjustly stood in judgment over Jesus and said "Prove yourself to be God. Answer my prayer on my terms in my ways. Then I will love and serve you." Have we not, at times, thought we deserved better treatment from God? Even though God's Word declares us guilty of sin in thought, word, and deed and worthy of temporal and eternal punishment, we still have the cheek to think and feel "I'm not really all that bad. I'm not perfect, nobody is, but come on, others have done far worse than anything I've ever done." Saints of God, we must repent and turn away from all such forms of self-justification.

Instead, we must heed the words of the apostle Paul from tonight's first reading from Philippians 2. How should we think of ourselves? Paul tells us, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (vs. 5-7). Instead of grasping at this and that form of self-justification – you know "I'm not really that bad, and at times I can be pretty decent" – we are to have the mind of Jesus who emptied Himself in obedience to His Father's will.

Consider God's King as He is crucified. The Lord's thoughts are not about getting revenge or pushing back the scorn onto the heads of those tormenting Him. His thoughts toward you and the world are not filled with disgust and anger but that of love. Jesus is determined to do what is necessary to bear your scorn and save you. That's the mind of Christ.

The sign nailed to the cross said, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." People walking by would have certainly thought, "Him? King of the Jews? What kind of joke is that?" Jesus wasn't the King Saul-like person standing handsome and a head taller than everyone else. In fact, Isaiah the prophet declared that the Messiah would have no beauty and glory that we should desire Him (Isaiah 53:2). Jesus voluntarily set

aside His kingly might in order to die in weakness and disgrace. That was the mind of Christ described by Paul in Philippians 2.

Jesus was rich, yet for sinners' sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. Placed on the throne of the cross, Jesus was unrecognizable as a king. But He perfectly fulfills His kingly work of taking away your sins and the sins of the world.

Take great comfort in all that is happening in this scene on Calvary. For our Crucified King is all about crowning you with glory and honor. King Jesus was all about lifting that burden of guilt from your shoulders. So He carried it all to the cross and destroyed it there so that you might be exalted as innocent and holy sons of God.

That's the mind of King Christ for you. May we too live in the mind and love of Jesus.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.