



Introduction

Even after Israel had experienced the vagaries of kings, the people still longed for a true king to set things right. He would have the king's title of Anointed One (Messiah); he would be the "one like a human being" (Son of Man) given dominion in Daniel's vision. Jesus is given these titles, even though he is nothing like an earthly king. His authority comes from the truth to which he bears witness, and those who recognize the truth voluntarily listen to him. We look forward to the day he is given dominion, knowing his victory will be the nonviolent victory of love.

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, ✚ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Have mercy on us, O God.

**We confess that we have sinned against you
and against our neighbor.**

**We have built walls instead of tables
and have turned away the stranger.**

**We have sought glory for ourselves
and have treasured that which does not satisfy.**

**Help us to love as you love,
to welcome those you send,
and to treasure mercy and justice.**

**Turn us from our ways to your ways,
and free us to serve those in need. Amen.**

God, who makes all things new,
forgives your sins for ✚ Jesus' sake
and remembers them no more.
Lift up your heads and your hearts.
Yours is the kingdom of God. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn ELW #408 / LBW # 522

Come, Thou Almighty King

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you anointed your beloved Son to be priest and sovereign forever. Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united by the glorious and gentle rule of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

To the community for whom this passage was written, it seemed as though the oppression they were experiencing would never end. Daniel's message is: It shall end. The Ancient One, who is judge, will call all nations to account and will give dominion to "one like a human being," the Messiah.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 93

¹The LORD is king, robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength.

The LORD has made the world so sure that it cannot be moved.

²**Ever since the world began, your throne has been established; you are from everlasting.**

³The waters have lifted up, O LORD, the waters have lifted up their voice;
the waters have lifted up their pounding waves.

⁴**Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea,
mightier is the LORD who dwells on high.**

⁵Your testimonies are very sure,
and holiness befits your house, O LORD, forever and forevermore.

Second Reading: Revelation 1:4b-8

The book of Revelation begins by celebrating the Almighty God, who spans all of time. Similarly, Jesus is celebrated as the firstborn from the dead who rules over the world's rulers. He is the one whose return we eagerly await.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Gospel: John 18:33-37

In John's gospel, the story of Jesus and Pilate presents two different ways of exercising power: through force or with love.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Who are you? Jesus and Pilate are doing a little dance. Peter has denied Jesus.

And Jesus has been taken to Pilate's headquarters by the Jews, because they are not permitted to put anyone to death. But Pilate could...

Pilate asked the crowd, what accusation do you bring against this man? They answered, no, not really. If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you. Pilate tries to give Jesus back to the crowd, but the crowd would not have it.

So, Pilate summons Jesus and then the famous question who are you? Are you who they say you are or not? Are you who you say you are? Or not. Are we part of that "everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" crowd?

Or are we a part of the crowd, wanting someone else to deal with this, Jesus?

Friends, this Jesus following isn't for the faint of heart. It can break our hearts as we bear witness to the pain of others...as we walk with those who are fearful. And yet it's exactly what we were called to be when we were washed in the waters of our baptism.

Listening to the voice of the one who came, who lived among us, who died of violent death, but rose again for us. All of us. All y'all. Everyone. No matter what.

I want to listen to that voice and on my best days in my best self, I do. But I know it's also easier to blame it on the crowd, than recognize myself in that crowd. As one participating in and promoting the things I think I wouldn't do myself, without the crowd pushing me alone.

This is the part of the story where I know my late husband would have something to say about the crowd we keep. It was his constant advice to the young adults who came in and out of our lives: "Be very careful...how you choose and who you choose as your friends. Know your crowd."

These days the crowd is loud and boisterous and sometimes just the wrong group to be a part of.

The crowd wanted Pilate to do their dirty work - work they knew was wrong; work they wanted done out of fear for their position for their understanding of the world and of their power. They let someone else take care of things that upset their going their merry way, without the challenge of this, Jesus, who challenged all they knew.

Friends, it's time to be challenged again by this Jesus. Jesus was that one thing that reminder that persistent call to be different and sometimes, I don't want to change - we don't want to change.

Jesus is called to love and care for the least of these ended in his violent death, but that very death killed our death. Jesus' violent death on the cross was not the end, but only the beginning of something different. Something new and something beyond our capacity to understand it.

Late Martin Luther King Junior talks about violence in this way: he said "the ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seems it seeks to destroy; instead of just diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence, you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence, you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate.

“So it goes returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness - only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate - only love can do that.”

Those are beautiful words that speak to a world devoid of stars. In our darkness, only love can drive out hate - only love. Being in relationship with those so different from ourselves that can move us toward reconciliation and love. This is not a task we can hand off to the crowd or to pilot.

We have to do the work ourselves of holding onto this message of Jesus. This message of love in the midst of uncertainty, fear and violence.

Jesus came into this world to testify to the truth. The truth is we have used religion to hurt, and that can't be the Jesus truth. We've used religion to make others less than, and that can't be the Jesus truth. We've used religion in ways that hurt others, and that can't be the Jesus truth.

Listening to the voice of Jesus means we pay attention to the least of these instead of moving them out of the way. We see Christ in those who beg on the streets, rather than looking away. We love our neighbors as ourselves, rather than speak ill of them, even the ones who are oh so hard to love.

Because I want to be accused of saying Jesus is king, and knowing that being a king meant something very different from our understanding.

Being a servant King means the last shall be first and the first last.

I pray we each step away from the crowd. And not get caught up in the musings of the crowd. But are bold enough to say Jesus is Lord! And that means love, grace, service, resurrection and life everlasting.

Let that be our truth. Let that be our response to the violence and hatred of this world that is sometimes devoid of stars.

May we be liked! Shining a light on injustice. Doing the work of forgiveness and loving our neighbors. All of our neighbors. Let that be our crowd. And let us do the work. Amen!

Hymn of the Day ELW # 434/LBW # 530

Jesus Shall Reign

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Nicene Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Eternal God, you hold firm amid the changes of this world. Hear us now as we pray for the church, the world, and everyone in need.

A brief silence.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to testify to the truth. We pray for preachers, missionaries, evangelists, and teachers who carry your forgiveness and love to the world. Fill their words and actions with compassion and kindness so that your truth will shine.

God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to liberate all of creation. We pray for all living things longing for the freedom to flourish, from ancient trees and wild grasses to endangered animals and rare insects. Give human beings compassionate hearts to care for them.

God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to lead us into the way of peace. Direct the members of international alliances in choosing a nonviolent path toward the future. Give them the humility and wisdom to make just decisions to benefit all. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to make us into your own people, set free to serve you. We pray for people who serve the well-being of others, especially ministries in our community. Renew them in their work. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you sent your Son Jesus to rule in all times and places. We pray for the friends of our congregation who are unable to join our worship in person and for all who are sick and suffering, especially those we name now. Join their prayers with ours and unite them with us in the body of Christ. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God, you sent your Son Jesus to be our beginning and our ending. We give thanks for those whose lives have given us a glimpse of Jesus' reign of justice and peace. Empower us to join their witness. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our hope and strength, we entrust to you all for whom we pray. Remain with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 805/LBW # 495

Lead On, O King Eternal!

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Deacon Tammy Jones West, Assistant to the Bishop of the NC Synod.