

## Gospel lesson

We skip over to the Gospel of John this week, where Pilate is questioning Jesus about who He is.



picture screencaptured from <https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch/Lumo-the-gospel-of-john.html/Lumo-john-18-1-19-3/english.html>; credit: LUMO

### John 18:33-37

(NRSV)

<sup>33</sup> Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"

<sup>35</sup> Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"

<sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."

<sup>37</sup> Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

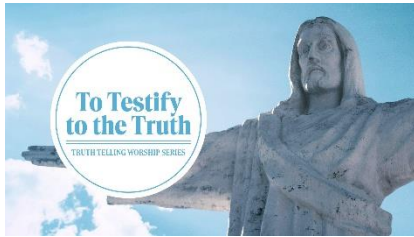
*The word of God for the people of God*

<Children's time>

<Hymn "Rejoice, the Lord Is King"

UMH #715>

## Message: To Testify to the Truth



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/truth-telling/reign-of-christ-sunday-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/reign-of-christ-sunday-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Almighty King of all creation,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may be emboldened to proclaim the truth of Your reign over all. Amen.

We conclude the "Truth Telling" series today with a reminder: "To Testify to the Truth."

"Established in 1925, Reign of Christ (or Christ the King) Sunday may be just a year away from its one-hundredth birthday, but it is still a newcomer in comparison to other celebrations on the liturgical calendar."<sup>1</sup>

<Interactive Time>

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<sup>1</sup> Theme summary taken from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/truth-telling>.



Christ the King statue, Antipolo Cathedral;  
picture cropped from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ\\_the\\_King\\_Antipolo\\_Cathedral\\_2023-11-26.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_the_King_Antipolo_Cathedral_2023-11-26.jpg)

Does anyone know the origins of this Reign of Christ Sunday? <Let them respond>

According to Frank C. Senn,

“Pope Pius XI established Christ the King Sunday in 1925 to counter what he regarded as the destructive forces of the modern world: secularism in the west and the rise of communism in Russia and fascism in Italy and Spain, harbingers of the Nazism soon to seize Germany...

Placed at the end of the church year, with its traditional eschatological emphasis, the festival...proclaimed Christ as “the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of humankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfillment of all aspirations.”<sup>2</sup>

What does a king do, exactly? <Let them respond>

Are all kings the same? <Let them respond>

What kind of king is Jesus? <Let them respond>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lutheranforum.com/blog/2017/11/11/the-not-so-ancient-origins-of-christ-the-king-sunday>, accessed 11/22/2024.

Why do you think the UMC today uses “Reign of Christ” instead of “Christ the King”? <Let them respond>

3 reasons come up on internet search:

1. "Reign" implies a continuous act of ruling and governing, while "King" can simply denote a position of authority.
2. To avoid masculine implications of "King."
3. As a reminder that Jesus' rule is not about earthly power but about love, grace, and the transformation of lives.



*Statue of King David playing the harp in the Great Church of Breda; image by ReneeWrites via Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-4.0.; picture cropped from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Breda\\_Grote\\_Kerk\\_beeld\\_koning\\_David\\_met\\_harp\\_voorkant.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Breda_Grote_Kerk_beeld_koning_David_met_harp_voorkant.jpg)*

In 2 Samuel, those who rule justly and fear God are a blessing for the people, while the godless hurt them. In the psalm, we hear the Lord's promise to bless David's lineage dependent on their keeping the covenant. Why do you think God put in that contingency? <Let them respond>

I think leaders need to follow God's wisdom for the health of humanity. We see in the world today what happens when the godless rule: believing in their own power, they work for selfish gains at the expense of others. They do not work for the long term benefit of all, only for the few they claim as theirs - typically to the detriment of the earth itself.

But they, and we, are mortal. Our time on this earth, just like us, is limited. We do not have the eternal perspective of God, who knows all of what led into this very moment and who can see where our choices will lead us, what will come out of the multitude of choices humans make every moment, every hour, every day. We are completely blind by comparison.



picture from  
<https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/vb-revelation-1/>;  
credit: [VideoBible.com](http://VideoBible.com)

John tells us in Revelation to look to Jesus, coming with the clouds, making every tribe of the earth wail on His account. What do you make of that imagery, that imminent coming of Christ? <Let them respond>

Many people picture that as Jesus's final coming, to collect the faithful and destroy everyone & everything else. Some warn people to prepare, before it is too late, lest they be destroyed too. I think those fear messages are omitting an important point: ***Jesus is already here. Jesus is already reigning!***

We need to ask, which ruler are we obeying in the here-and-now?

† An egotistical political ruler that demands obedience else we will be punished, or our loving eternal ruler who asks obedience that we may be nurtured and thrive?

- † One who demands we fill coffers with material wealth or the one who blesses us with all created things, asking that we share with one other?
- † One who sins and causes us to sin, or the one who did not sin and cleanses us of sin?
- † One who does things for love, to gain it for themselves, or the one who does things from love, to share it with all?

Are we doing things for love, or from love? Love involves a choice, of how we will nurture those we love to live better even when it sometimes causes us pain. It is not about control, but about enabling them to choose to love well too, as Jesus loves us.

Jesus did not do things just for love, to win favor, but completely from love - otherwise, He would not have stood before Pilate as He did. But Jesus loved the people, even the Pharisees and temple priests and those who killed Him, too much to let them continue living comfortably in the lie of sin, to simply ignore what they did not realize they were missing.

It is not easy to confront people with the truth when they are so invested in a lie that they will do almost anything to maintain its façade. We see that today, where people cling to political spins and even some outright lies because they are so invested in their side that they cannot accept an alternative point of view as legitimate, let alone their being

wrong and even hurtful to others.

It is sometimes very hard to remain faithful and loyal to the Ruler of all in the face of worldly demands for allegiance, but we are called to do so.

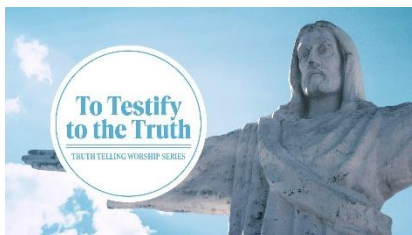
God, grant me the *patience* to work with  
the unjust *systems* I cannot change today,  
the *courage* to strategically enact  
*progress* when I know I can, and  
the *wisdom* to know that,  
despite *structural* oppression,  
I still can make a *difference*. Amen.

*text formatted on background  
picture from MMMS collection;  
[Franciscan adaptation of Serenity  
Prayer posted by Des Moines  
Intentional Eucharistic Community](#)*

Jesus showed that we do not have to institute a rebellion to follow God's commands, but rather by living God's commands, we improve the situation of all trapped in sinful political structures.

I like this variation on the Serenity Prayer that I recently saw posted by the Des Moines Intentional Eucharistic Community:

God, grant me the patience to work with  
the unjust systems I cannot change today,  
the courage to strategically enact  
progress when I know I can, and  
the wisdom to know that,  
despite structural oppression,  
I still can make a difference. Amen.



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<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/truth-telling/reign-of-christ-sunday-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/reign-of-christ-sunday-year-b-graphics>*

So on this Reign of Christ Sunday, let us commit

ourselves once more to the kingdom of God, to following Jesus's commands, and to sharing divine truth as led by the Holy Spirit, beginning with: