

**Grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come. Amen.**

<sup>27</sup> Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. <sup>28</sup> They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup> and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. <sup>30</sup> They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. <sup>31</sup> After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. **This is God's Word.**

**Dear fellow members of God's Kingdom,**

What comes to mind when you hear the title "King?" Do you think of the creepy Burger King guy? Or maybe some king you have seen in a movie or on TV? Do you think of a benevolent king who is kind to his subjects and yet protects them with a strong army or is your picture of a somewhat menacing king who is cruel and has no mercy – a king who demands loyalty, tribute and anything else he can get from the subjects of his kingdom?

I would guess we all have different ideas when it comes to that title and position of king, and yet none of us have experienced a real king in an earthly kingdom. But I would bet that as you listened to what was going on with Jesus in our Gospel lesson, he probably did not fit your picture of a king. And yet, even in those circumstances he is our king.

So as we consider this portion of scripture let's take a closer look at, **"Jesus – our King of Kings."** As we do that scripture will help us to see that he is, **"Our King of Power,"** and **"Our King of Grace."**

**I.** It's hard to see Jesus as our king of power in this section of scripture. Matter of fact we might think of Jesus as being weak and defenseless especially in the midst of the soldiers who are beating him and mocking him. In order to see and understand his power we have to go back to his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.

John, in his gospel describes the scene when the soldiers came out to arrest Jesus, **"[He] went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?'"** <sup>5</sup> **"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said...** <sup>6</sup> **When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground."** (John 18:4-6) Jesus asked once again and this time as he acknowledged that he was the one they were looking for he asked that they let the disciples go but Peter drew his sword to defend Jesus and Jesus said, **"Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."** <sup>53</sup> **Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?** <sup>54</sup> **But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"** (Matthew 26:52-54)

We see the power of Jesus as the soldiers fell back when Jesus identified himself as the one they were looking for and Jesus tells his disciples that he has legions of angels at his command if he should desire to call on them but that was not to be. As the events of his arrest, trial, beating, mocking and crucifixion all began to unfold Jesus acknowledged that it had to happen in this way. Isaiah described what we call Jesus' passive restraint in this way, **"<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and**

**afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”** (Isaiah 53:7). Jesus, our powerful king, could have walked away from all of this but he didn't. He could have used his power to bring death and destruction on those who were afflicting him but he didn't, because this is the way it had to be in order to redeem the sins of the world – our sins. It is hard to see Jesus as our powerful king when we see the suffering he endured for us but never doubt his power.

He was active in creating the universe in which we live. During his ministry he healed and did miracles and cast out demons. We have plenty of examples of Jesus' power and so when he sets that power aside in the midst of his suffering we don't want to be dismayed, for his power was evident in his restraint – he loves us and he is obedient to his Father so this is the way things had to be.

Sometimes we would like to see God just wipe out the wicked and evil people in this world. He certainly could if he wanted to and then, in our minds, the world would be so much better. But we forget that we aren't so innocent either. We may not commit some of the “big” sins we see happening all around us but we sin never the less and all sin is bad in God's eyes. We can be thankful that God, in his wisdom and power, brings us grace and mercy rather than death and destruction. God in his power went to the cross to suffer and die for our sins – because that is the way it had to be.

So be thankful that we have a powerful God who is able to deliver us in every trouble. Be thankful that we have a wise God who uses that power in just the right way to help us in every need. And be thankful that Jesus didn't exercise the full use of his power 2000 years ago because then we would be left without his grace and his grace brings us the gift of faith, life and salvation. Yes, we have a King of Power but we can be thankful that we also have a King of Grace.

**II.** The Roman soldiers did not like to be posted to Jerusalem. It was far away from the center of Roman life and to them, a somewhat desolate posting with not much to do. So they came up with this game called the “Game of Kings,” to entertain themselves. At first, they would take a new recruit – someone who had just become a soldier and had just arrived. The new recruit thought maybe this was an initiation ritual because they would gather the contingent of soldiers together – maybe 200 or better – and dress this recruit in a purple robe and give him a cheesy crown and a scepter and then mock and beat him. They would yell and jeer at him and this could go on for hours and at the end of it all they would kill him. Yes, they would kill one of their own, just for sport and so called fun.

Somewhere along the way the leaders figured out that they were losing good soldiers in this cruel “game” and so they brought about change. You might think they would have eliminated the game but rather than do that, they said the game could only be played with prisoners who had been condemned. That is what was happening with Jesus in our text. He had no rights and he was a condemned prisoner so the soldiers were able to mistreat him in any way that came to mind and they were a cruel and sadistic bunch. After they had had their fun they took Jesus out to be crucified – the final end to their terrible game and yet it had to happen this way.

Could our Lord be gracious in these circumstances? We certainly wouldn't but as Jesus was being nailed to the cross, do you remember what he said? **“Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”** (Luke 23:34). A lot of times we think that this just refers to the soldiers who were nailing him to the cross but in reality it probably is also a prayer for those soldiers who were beating and mocking him in Pilate's courtyard and even the one who did the flogging before the beating took place. We would have cursed the soldiers but Jesus prayed for them and asked that they be forgiven. That truly is a picture of God's grace – a picture we never would have expected.

But God's grace continued as Jesus suffered on that cross for our sins. The soldiers continued to taunt him, one of the thieves hanging next to him continued to taunt him and even the Pharisees who had come out to witness his death taunted him to come down if he was truly the Son of God. He certainly had the power to come down off the cross and he truly was innocent but so that we might be declared innocent of our sins he stayed on that cross and endured the punishment we deserved. And in the midst of all this cruelty and suffering he announced his grace and mercy to one of the thieves hanging next to him. What a beautiful picture of God's grace in so many ways. We don't deserve God's love in any form but he loves us anyway and as our King he fought the greatest battle ever for our lives as he battled Satan on the cross.

Satan came at him with the guilt of every sin of mankind and Jesus came right back with his precious blood to pay the guilt price and finally Jesus was able to proclaim the battle finished – our sins had been paid for completely and we are his prize.

Through faith we share in this wonderful victory he won for us on the cross and through faith we are members of his kingdom.

At times we may feel like we don't deserve God's love. Our sins remind us of what our true nature really is and it's not pretty. But God showers his love on us anyway. That is what his grace is all about – how he took our place, met the Father's demand for perfection and then completed God the Father's plan for our salvation by going to the cross. The picture of our bloody Savior on the cross is the most beautiful picture of our Savior – the King of Grace. When we are feeling down and depressed, remember how much Jesus loves you and how his grace is evident in bringing you salvation.

As we celebrate Christ the King Sunday we know that Jesus does not meet the world's idea of a king – He didn't do what they thought he should do for them. But the ruler of the world is Satan and Christ came to destroy Satan for us. The battle ground was the cross and our Savior – our King won the battle for us. We may not always trust our Savior king to be able to help us through our trouble and trials but remember that the wisdom of our king exceeds the wisdom of the world and there is nothing more powerful than our king. So rely on his grace and mercy to reach out to us as it has so many times already and remember that we have a Savior King who loves us and cares about us and we look forward to the day when we will be in his royal court forever. Amen.