**Making Jesus King**

Based on [John 6:1-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%206%3A1-15&version=NIV)

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Fourth Sunday in Lent ~ Laetare

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Shakespeare famously wrote, all the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players. Everyone is playing a part, I suppose, in life...though how conscious of this they are is debatable. It is at least accurate to say that all the world is a story and the parts that we play are influenced by how we believe that story to end, and what part we as individuals and as mankind are to play in it.

There are those who believe that the story of the world will have a bad ending, or at least that it could if we don’t do something about it. Global Thermonuclear War could decimate all life on earth. Climate change could do the same. Maybe a huge asteroid could collide with earth. Some who hold to the possibility of bad endings, like climate change or war, emphasize that mankind can do better and if we make the right choices, we can bring about a good ending of a society without social injustice, without poverty, inequality, even death or at least tragic death. But it is not inevitable, we could fail and destroy ourselves.

I want you to realize that these stories, at least in the way they present the end of the world, are not christian. By that I mean, the story of mankind is guaranteed a happy ending. Even if some will be not be saved, heaven awaits the faithful. The inevitability of a happy ending...that is a way to tell the story of the world that is entirely based on prediction and faith.

Those who believe the story of the world will have a happy ending, there are two philosophies. One is that mankind is on a course that will inevitably lead to utopia on earth, before or apart from the public intervention of God. This is Communism as a secular philosophy, Millenialism as a religious one.

The other is the opposite. Scripture teaches that Man will continue to persist in damaging and destructive practices, and even if his power and technology increases, so will his corruption and evil. And the evil of the world will come to an end, but not by any human work or effort. It is not by men or societies or governments seizing opportunities, choosing the right rulers and righting the injustices of the earth that will bring about the perfect society. When the world least expects it, Christ will come again to topple the rulers of the earth and establish his reign here. Nothing we can or will do will trigger or hasten his coming, nothing we do can prevent it. The only trigger for his coming is the decree of his Father declared before the foundations of the world, and that time will not change, no matter what we do.

We all worry about good times and bad times to come. We all know that the history and the future of the world will involve times of abundance and of famine, of boom and of bust, of lockdown and opening up. But the ending of the story of our human race...it is foreordained, it is declared, it will be a victory. It will be our victory, not because we won it, but because Christ won the victory and will give it to us. In short, our faith does not allow anxiety over the fate of the world or false hope in it’s redemption before the second coming of the king.

The reason I bring this up is because of the last verse of our gospel text today. After Jesus miraculously feeds the crowds from an otherwise insufficient supply of food, the recognize him as powerful and capable of taking care of them. So, the scripture says, “Percieving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.”

Consider this...what is wrong with wanting to make Jesus their king? Why didn’t Jesus allow it and accept it? Isn’t he our rightful king? Why does he withdraw from them? In a couple of weeks, we will arrive at Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday. And Jesus enters Jerusalem receiving accolades as being the Son of David, meaning he is the rightful king of that lineage. And he accepts their Hosannas. Why then, but not before?

The difference is the phrase “they were about to come and take him *by force* to make him king.” By force. This means, by their own power hastening the day, they were going to crown him apart from the will of the Father.

There was a famous episode in the middle ages where Charles the Great, Charlamagne, was crowned king by the pope, Leo III. This was consequential, because what it communicated was that the king received his office to rule by the authorization of the church and it’s head the pope. Charles became king, but the pope made him king. And it was the beginning of all sorts of conflict between church and state to follow. If Charlamagne was crowned by the pope, could the pope decrown him?

If Jesus is made king by the power and force of men, it follows that men can uncrown him. If Jesus is crowned by men, doesn’t that mean that men are greater than Jesus? People that vote in a president or a prime minister means that authority ultimately resides in the people, that means that they can vote him out.

Jesus has received his crown, to be sure, but he has not received it from men or from the power of men. He was crowned by his Father, and rules from the right hand of his throne. And how did this happen? Did men enthrone him? No, we set him on a cross to humiliate him. But what man meant for evil God meant for Good. By that cross and agony, God had prepared a way for his son to be lifted up so that all men would be drawn to him. The sins of all men were provided for by that one body--Just as crowds were fed by one small meal--through the blessing of Jesus. This world set him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead and set him on a throne. And even now he has all power and authority in heaven and on earth. And he is active in his fathers work. His kingdom is coming, but it will not come by our efforts. We don’t hasten the kingdom but wait for it. We don’t take it by force, but receive it by faith. For our Lord’s kingdom is not of this world, but of the world that is to come.

So how are we to conduct ourselves as we wait for our coming King? Put off the works of the flesh, which can be summed up in the hearts sinful desire to take what we want by force, rather than faith. Receive your daily bread with glad and sincere thanks. Do not avoid your neighbor in his need but serve him as you are able. Do not seek to save the world, but work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Do not force the kingdom of God, but wait for it with patience, knowing that those who endure to the end will be saved. Take refuge in the ark of the church, fulfill your vocation with faith and joy, an rest assured that the kingdom will come in the Father’s time, and it is the Father’s good pleasure to give it to you.