

The Suffering King

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. A special welcome. If you're new or visiting with us, we're glad that you're here.

And we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good.

They don't need God's grace and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark. You'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus in his life and his death and his resurrection. And here we've come right up against Jesus' crucifixion and death.

In fact, it's the crucifixion that we're looking at this week. And of course, there are many, many things that we could say about this passage. In fact, often when we're looking at different books of the Bible, we look at them and then we say, OK, how does this point us towards Christ?

[1 : 11] How does this show us Christ? How does this letter from Paul do that or this narrative from the Old Testament? In fact, here we have the privilege and the joy not of saying, how does this show us Christ, but of actually looking straight at him, of seeing Christ in all his beauty and his glory.

And there's a lot of beauty and glory in this passage and the passages to come. And so the challenge here is knowing what to say and all the things that we could look at and meditate on about Christ's death.

For us this morning, I want you to notice in this passage the repetition that we see. As I've told you before, repetition matters a lot when we're reading the Scriptures. And here we see not once, not twice, three times Jesus referred to as the King.

Mark seems to want to emphasize that for us. Why? What is it that makes Jesus the ultimate king? What do we learn about his kingship from his crucifixion?

With that, I'm going to invite you to turn with me to God's Word. We're in Mark chapter 15, starting at verse 16. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone.

[2 : 27] You can turn in your Bible. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us that his Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, which means that God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead he's given us his Word to show us the way to go.

And so that's why we read now Mark chapter 15, starting at verse 16. Verse 19.

Verse 21.

Verse 21.

Verse 22.

[4 : 33] Verse 21.

Verse 22.

Verse 22. Verse 22.

At the end of every year, you'll see a summary come out of the major events in world history. And of course, every year has something significant that happens.

Some years, though, more than others. The story of the past Mo■es and Shirley Herobstan, it's the story of Mae Sears.

[6 : 26] Toy Story 1. It's the story of a bunch of toys belonging to a six-year-old boy, Andy, and we're introduced very quickly to this rivalry, a tension between Woody, the sheriff, who's been among the toys for a long time. He's led them faithfully through many challenges, and this newcomer, Buzz Lightyear, who threatens to replace Andy as, or replace, Buzz, friends, replace Woody as Andy's favorite toy. Now, there's tension around that fact, just who gets to be on top in the world of this six-year-old, but there's another tension that emerges as well because they have, in fact, a different interpretation of reality. Andy and all, or Woody and all the other toys know that they're toys. Buzz, on the other hand, is convinced that he is a real space ranger. In fact, not only is Buzz a real space ranger, he's convinced that he can fly, and so he tells this, claims this, believes this over and over, and Woody tries to disabuse him of this idea. He tells him multiple times, look, you are just a toy. You can't fly. Buzz, of course, refuses to believe this until he has to face reality head on. At one point, he wanders into the room of the neighbor across the street, Sid, and there's a TV playing there, and what does that TV give but this advertisement for buying the Buzz Lightyear toy? And you can buy it at Al's Toy Barn. And what does it say near the end of the commercial? It says, you can read it on the screen and hear it spoken out loud, not a flying toy. Now, you can see this look of concern on Buzz's face as he realizes maybe everything he's believed is false, but then he gets this great confidence. He realizes, no, this TV is not telling the truth. I am a space ranger, and I can fly. And so the music swells, and Buzz gets out and climbs to the top of the second story of railing on this house, and he leaps out down the stairwell, knowing that he can fly out the window that he sees ahead of him. And what happens? Buzz plummets.

He hits the stairs, knocks off of them, hits the floor, and his left arm completely breaks off.

He hears Woody's voice from before. You are a toy. You can't fly. Woody's been right all along. Buzz looks at his costume, and what does he see written there, but made in Taiwan. The verdict is in. Buzz is just a toy. How do we know he cannot fly?

The verdict is in. In this passage, in verses 29 through 32, we find the Jews, the Gentiles mocking Christ. And why are they mocking him? He's clearly not a real king.

He's clearly not a real messiah. And how do we know? Well, it's obvious, right? Real kings aren't crucified. In fact, that's exactly how they mock him. Verse 31, he saved others he cannot save himself.

[10 : 21] What a joke. Here's this man who's been claiming to be a messiah and a king, and finally reality has landed. Finally, he can see what the rest of us have seen all along. Verse 32, let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe. Show us. Come down.

Fly for us. This is clearly pretend, right? The gig is up for Jesus. He is not the king of the Jews.

You're not a real space ranger. You're just a toy. How do we know? You can't do what real space rangers can do. You can't fly. You're not a real messiah. You're just a man. How do we know? You can't do what real messiahs do. You can't free yourself. And so the Romans here mock him because he's not a real king. And the Jews mock him because he's not a real messiah.

It's not just, though, that Jesus seems to be powerless. It's not just that he has done the exact opposite of a king by ending up on a cross. It's not just that he freed others but cannot save himself. The entire symbolism of this passage undermines what they expect. Where would you find, who would you find on a cross? Crosses are not for kings. Crosses are for slaves.

You can't be on a cross and be a king. Those two things do not go together. They cannot be true at the same time. And so he's clearly not a king. He's just a slave. It's worse than that. It's not just that he's a slave but he's flanked by robbers. Verse 27, and with him they crucified two robbers, one on his left, right, and one on his left. And it's worse even than that. It's not just that he's flanked by robbers.

[12 : 42] He's mocked by them. He's so low, even the robbers make fun of him. Verse 32, again, those who were crucified with him also reviled him. Is he clothed like a king? No. Look at verse 24. He's hanging naked.

Is he crowned like a king? No. Look at verse 17. He doesn't have a crown of gold. He has a crown of thorns. Everything points towards Jesus being a joke. He is the toy who thinks he's a space ranger.

He's not God. He's not the Messiah. He's not certainly the king of the Jews. He is just another foolish, deluded man crushed under the machine of the Roman Empire.

Nor is it just the symbolism. The soldiers make fun of him as well. Verses 16 through 20, they're saying basically this. It should be as clear to you as it is to us that you are just pretending.

You're just a live action role play Messiah. What king finds himself so easily arrested? What king finds himself hanging on a cross? Verse 17, it's all pretend. And what do you do?

[14 : 26] When you play pretend? Well, it's time for a little dress up, right? That's their mocking of him, right? They put on him a purple cloak and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. Everything here is meant to undermine the statement we hear not once, not twice, but three times, that Jesus is the great king. All the evidence points in the opposite direction.

Of course, he's not a king. He's just a man. A man whose run, perhaps a good run, has finally come to an end.

There's only one problem, which is that they don't know that Jesus is operating under a completely different paradigm.

Jesus is not the expected king. He's the unexpected king. He's not the king who fits what they want and what they know.

He's the upside down king. There is something about the world that Jesus understands and they don't. And what they don't know is what C.S. Lewis calls the deeper magic.

[15 : 59] In his children's story, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Lewis tells the story of four children who are sent to a professor's house during World War II. And they have this wardrobe that they find that serves as a door into a different world.

And that world's called Narnia. Now, while they're in that world, one of the siblings, Edmund, betrays his brothers and his sister. And so he has to die. The White Witch, which is the representation of evil, comes to Aslan and she cites the deep magic.

She says, look, you know all these things that were set in place at the beginning of the world. And so you know traitors belong to me. Traitors have to die. Aslan, then, the great lion, makes this switch.

He says, look, I'll make a deal for you. I will die in his place. And so the witch kills him. Witch thinks that she has won at this point. She declares victory and says, now that Aslan is dead, you think you've saved Edmund, but actually I can just kill him now.

I'm going to rule over all of Narnia. What a fool Aslan has been. He didn't realize that once he was gone, everything was on the table.

[17 : 14] Susan and Lucy, the sisters, visit the place where Aslan died, but they find not Aslan's body, but Aslan himself. And very confused, Susan asks him, what does all this mean?

And so Aslan explains it to her, and this is on the back of your worship guide. Though the witch knew the deep magic, there is a magic deeper still, which she did not know.

Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she looked a little further back into the stillness and the darkness before time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation.

She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in the traitor's stead, the table would crack, and death itself would start working backwards.

What does Jesus know that the Jews and the Gentiles do not? Jesus knows the deeper magic. They believe it is his defeat when it is his victory.

[18 : 32] They believe that his crucifixion shows he must not be a king when, in fact, it proves that he is. They think that Jesus has made a fatal mistake when, in fact, it is the keystone of his entire plan.

They think he is a pretend king. But Jesus here shows us he is the greatest king.

He saved others. He cannot save himself. Well, of course, that is what the king must do.

And so that is what Calvin tells us. This is on page 8 of your worship guide. It was because our Lord Jesus Christ chose to be our king and head that he did not save himself.

Why is Jesus hung on a cross in the place of a savior? Not because he is powerless, but because he is powerful. Why does he take this place?

[19 : 45] Not because the gig is finally up, but because the culmination is here. The greatest king comes not as a conquering warrior, at least not yet.

But he comes instead as a suffering savior. Why did he not spare himself? Why did he endure so bitter and shameful a death?

Because only by such a ransom could we be set free? Jesus had to die to be the king of the Jews.

His death does not show and does not prove that he is a fraud. In fact, it is quite the opposite. It shows that he is the real and true and genuine king.

The great irony of this passage is this, that the soldiers and everyone else are telling the truth, even though they think they are mocking Jesus.

[20 : 54] He is the king for the very reasons they think he isn't. So what are we to make of all this?

What's the mistake of the soldiers and of the Jews? Mistake is simple, that they don't know the deeper magic. They don't know that Jesus' kingdom is the upside down kingdom.

They're almost right. They're just not completely right. And so let's pull out our red pens for a moment and let's do some editing. Look with me at verse 31.

They say this, He saved others, he cannot save himself. We only need to change a couple words there. He saved others, he will not save himself.

He saved others because he will not save himself. Jesus is not a victim.

[22 : 08] He is not an accident of history. It is because he is on the cross that he is the great king.

That is how he is able to be your king. That is how he pays the ransom so that you could be set free.

This is the king who should have a robe and a crown.

And the Roman soldiers actually tell the truth, even as they mock. What kind of crown does this kind of king have?

The upside down king does have a crown of thorns. The king who suffers for his people does have a crown of thorns.

[23 : 09] The king who gives up his life so that others might live does hang on a cross. Meant only for slaves.

They were telling the truth. When they gave him a crown of thorns, they were telling the truth.

When they said he saved others. He did. And he will. They think it's a fatal flaw.

They think it's a mistake. But it's actually the plan. They think it's Jesus' defeat. When in fact, it's his victory.

They think he's a pretend king. When in fact, he is the greatest king. The king who hangs on a cross for his people.

[24 : 08] Christian, the king who hangs on a cross for you. So what?

So what do we do with this picture, this knowledge of the true and greatest king? One pastor says this. Jesus had said that the greatest love is to lay one's life down for one's friends.

At the cross, he ups his own ante. His love is greater than the greatest love because he lays down his life for his enemies.

His love is greater than the greatest love because he lays down his life for his enemies. Christian, no one loves you more than Christ.

And you see that right here. Christian, the greater the love, the greater the loyalty.

[25 : 24] Right? Who is it that you follow no matter what? The person who's stuck with you no matter what?

Who do you trust no matter what? The person who's helped you at great personal cost. Who do we love more than any other?

It's our Lord Jesus. And we love him more than any other because his love is greater than any other. In fact, we're already saying that this morning.

Page four of your worship guide. We're the whole realm of nature mine. That we're a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine.

Demands my soul, my life, my all. What do we do with the king who's treated like a slave?

[26 : 32] We give him our soul, our life, our all. Who would we want to follow more? Who would we be compelled towards greater obedience than the one who does this for us?

How is it that our lives are filled with love and joy and affection? Not just for Christ, but for others. It's when we see his love first.

It's when we see Christ on the cross doing the very opposite of what the Jews and the Gentiles expect. When we see Christ's love, there is nothing more appropriate than joy and love and obedience.

And until we see Christ's love, unless we see his love here on the cross, we will not have joy and love and obedience.

This, Christian, is the foundation of your faith. This, Christian, is the starting point for everything else.

[27 : 57] This, Christian, is the foundation and the baseline. This, Christian, is the foundation of your faith.

This, Christian, is the foundation of your faith. It means that Jesus is worth following no matter what. He's worth loving and living for, and he's worth suffering and dying for.

And if we ever need a reminder or a motivation, we look at him here. We see and savor Christ on the cross.

If you're not a Christian, I hope that this image of Jesus is a challenge to you for this reason, that you cannot think simply of Jesus as a good teacher.

C.S. Lewis famously presented three options for how you should view Jesus. He is either a liar, a lunatic, or a lord. And this passage here gets to the center of the second one.

[29 : 34] If Jesus is not the Christ, if he is not the king of the Jews, then he is clearly a lunatic. He believes he's a king when he isn't.

He is Buzz Lightyear thinking he's a space ranger when he's just a toy. But if he is the great king, if he is the one who has taken the place for his people, if he is the one who is treated as a slave so that you could be a son or a daughter, he's not just a lord, he's the greatest lord.

He's not just a king, he's the greatest king. What the Jews and the Gentiles run up against here is what the Apostle Paul will speak about later in 1 Corinthians 1 when he says this, For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Jesus on the cross was folly to the Roman soldiers, and it was folly to the Jewish leaders. But to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

And what is the folly? The folly has been described by one person in this way, that an instrument of torture would be used as an instrument of salvation. The folly is that an instrument of torture would be used as an instrument of salvation, which takes us back to verse 31.

[31 : 24] He saved others. He cannot save himself. No, he saved others because he refused to save himself.

That is why he's the greatest king. The king worth living and loving for and the king worth suffering and dying for. And that's why we sing, And wonder at such mercy that calls me as I am.

For hands that should discard me hold wounds which tell me come. Beneath the cross of Jesus, my unworthy soul is one.

Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you for the beauty and the glory of Jesus Christ.

We thank you that he was willing to be treated as a slave so that we could be your sons and your daughters. We thank you that he embraced not the way of this world, but the upside down nature of the kingdom.

[32 : 37] We thank you that you use an instrument of torture as an instrument of salvation. And so we ask now that you would use that beauty to melt our hearts, to transform our lives, that you would change us and grow us to be more and more like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And it's in his name that we ask all of these things. Amen. Amen. Amen.