

Greater LOVE | Matthew 26-27

Intro | Greater King

As we prepare to celebrate Easter, the most important day in the Christian faith, we have been spending some time considering the last days prior to Jesus crucifixion. In these last days, Jesus says things that would have shocked Jewish ears. In their view, he is declaring false prophecies about his future, making heretical claims about his messiahship, and teaching demonic doctrines about God the Father. Men who have devoted their lives to knowing God's Word reject Jesus because what they understand it to say. More than once, Jesus calls them blind guides and hypocritical teachers who have heads full of knowledge and hearts full of pride. Jesus tells them: *³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, John 5.39*

For hundreds of years, they have been waiting for another prophet like Moses, another priest like Aaron, and another King like David. In these last weeks, Jesus reveals himself to be the prophet, priest, and King that God promised; as prophet he foretells his death, as a priest he identifies himself as the lamb of God that he will sacrifice, and in today's text He will confirm his identity as the coming King who will rule. But **Jesus is an unexpected King. He offends everyone with his teaching—both the religious and the irreligious. And as a result, Jesus is rejected by everyone, leaders, soldiers, and priests.** Yet, ironically, each group identifies Jesus as King in their own way. Through their mockery, they praise the one who is humbly giving himself into their hands. And therein lays the difference between earthly and heavenly kings. **Earthly kings take for themselves and force us to see others less important than ourselves. Our heavenly King gives of himself and helps us to see others more important than ourselves.** And whatever king rules your inner heart, will be the king who rules your outer life.

An Expected King | Son of David

The Jewish people have been waiting for the promised King. As one nation, Old Testament Israel was ruled by one monarch for only 120 years of its history. From 1050 to 930 B.C. **Kings Saul (from the tribe of Benjamin), David (from the tribe of Judah), and Solomon each ruled for forty years.** After Solomon's death, the unified kingdom was divided into two distinct nations—Israel North and Judah South—with different kings. This was God's punishment for worshipping many pagan gods under Solomon. There ended up being upwards of 40 different kings, 80% of which were evil. **There were a lot of bad kings.**

Before Solomon took things from bad to worse, God had made a promise to his father, David, the greatest King of Israel. . Near the end of his life, God made a covenant with David saying in *2Samuel 7.10-13*
¹² *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.* ¹³ *He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.* Later, the prophet Isaiah declared that a male child would be born *“and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore - Isaiah 9.6.* Again, another prophet named Jeremiah also proclaimed that a King would come to restore justice. *Jeremiah 23.5* *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. A greater King would come.*

A Rejected King | King of the Jews

Having been conquered and ruled by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and now the Romans, the Jewish people are eager for their King to arrive and overthrow a godless government devoted to idolatry. And, when Jesus enters Jerusalem on the last week of His life during the most important week in the Jewish faith, the crowds declare him to be the promised King in *Matthew 21.8-9*: *⁸ Most of the crowd*

spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" This was not the first time that Jesus was identified as the promised King. In the gospel of Luke, when the angel Gabriel came and told a teenage virgin named Mary that she would conceive a Son. He also said in Luke 1.31-32: ³¹ *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.* ³² *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,* ³³ *and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.* But, as I said, **Jesus is an unexpected King.** He confuses everyone with his origins and offends everyone with his teachings—both the religious and the irreligious. **And as a result, Jesus is rejected by everyone, be it leaders, soldiers, or priests.** Yet, ironically, each group identifies **Jesus as King in their rejection.**

When you combine the stories of the four gospels, we learn that Jesus is secretly arrested and falsely accused first in the court of Annas, a former High Priest and father-in-law of the current High Priest Caiaphas. After some questioning he is sent to the High Priest's palace where he is illegally tried for blasphemy. Gathered at the palace are those, and only those, chief priests, elders, scribes, and other religious leaders who want to see him dead. After a charade of a trial, complete with false witnesses, Caiaphas accuses Jesus of blasphemy. Caiaphas and all those gathered agree that he deserves death according to Jewish law. But the Jews cannot kill anyone, so they trump the charge up to treason and take him first to Herod and then to the Roman governor in the morning. ¹¹ *Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You have said so."* ¹² *But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer.* ¹³ *Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?"* ¹⁴ *But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. – Matthew 27.11-14. Jesus is accused as a defenseless king.*

The governor doesn't desire to condemn an innocent man, so he offers to release him or a murderer named Barabbas. Calling for Jesus crucifixion, unless Jesus is substituted for a sinner and he is sentenced to death, and delivered to professional soldiers who prepare him to die on the cross. **There, they mock him as King.** ²⁷ *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him.* ²⁸ *And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,* ²⁹ *and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"* ³⁰ *And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.* ³¹ *And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. Matthew 26.27-31 Jesus is mocked as a pretend king.*

Finally, Jesus is lifted up on the cross to give his life in between two thieves who spent their lives taking it from others. ³⁷ *And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."* ³⁸ *Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.* ³⁹ *And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads* ⁴⁰ *and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."* ⁴¹ *So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,* ⁴² *"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.* ⁴³ *He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'* " ⁴⁴ *And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. Matthew 27.37-42 Jesus is criticized as a weak king.*

An Unexpected King | Jesus the King

All of this demonstrates, not only how comprehensive the rejection of Jesus was by the world (religious and irreligious), **but also how specific.** **The world does not reject Jesus as teacher, servant, or example, but as King.** One of the primary reasons Jesus was rejected as King was because he didn't act like a typical king, nor did he establish his rule in the typical way. **His kingdom comes through humility.**

But how do we know that Jesus was a humble King and not just weak a weak man? Consider what Jesus said on the night he was arrested. The night Jesus was arrested, Peter attempted to defend him. *51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" Matthew 26.51-55. **Jesus, the one who caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dead to rise, could have stopped everything at any moment.** But he humbled himself, even to the point of death.*

Jesus, the Son of God in human flesh, freely went to the cross. The king of the universe willingly subjected himself to the judgment of a human governor. The king of creation, silently endured being spit on by mouths, mocked by tongues, and beaten by hands that he created. The King of the Jews sacrificially died on a cross in order to forgive the sins of those who put him there. Jesus was radically humble.

Humility is something we admire, but it has never been something the we expect from kings. Back in 1 Samuel 8, the people demanded the prophet Samuel give them a King so that they could be like other nations. God allowed Samuel to give them what they wanted and told him not to be personally offended—they were rejecting Him not Samuel. Then, through Samuel, God warned Israel about what they were going to receive. *1 Samuel 8.10-18 10 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. 11 He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots...He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers... He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants...He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants... He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work... He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. 18 And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."* **Essentially, God says the earthly Kings will be characterized by taking your family, your wealth, your work, and everything important to you in your life.**

A New King | Who Rules Your Heart

Men reject Jesus as king, but they do not reject all kings. In John 19.14, when Pontius Pilate asked the Jews if they wanted him to "crucify their king" they responded, "**He is not our King. But Caesar is.**" **Who is your King? Who rules? Something or someone rules our hearts and governs our lives.** Apart from Christ, something is supremely central to our lives, defining who we are, directing our perceptions, and influencing how we act. Whatever king rules your inner heart, will be the king who rules your outer life.

Every earthly king takes. A king is that someone or something that takes your time, money, and energy. It is that person or thing that captivates your mind when you have nothing to think about. It is that thing that takes you away, not merely from the things that you feel are important, but the things that God declares are important in His Word. Whatever earthly King rules your heart, is that person or thing that demands your devotion while promising ultimate security, provision, and joy. You are not only a citizen of this kingdom, governed by its value system; you are its ambassador working to increase its influence. And that is accomplished by taking more for yourself at the expense of others. After all, that is how your king rules.

Jesus is not like the Kings of men who only take—King Jesus gives. He exercises the greatest possible humility, God in human flesh denying himself glory and life so that others might be glorified and live with him. . Our King is a king who gives all that he has so that we will do the same for others. **Our heavenly King gives of himself and helps us to see others more. important than ourselves. Jesus Kingdom exists anywhere Jesus rules.** *2Corinthians 5.14-15 14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live*

might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. **If you're truly ruled by the love of Christ then, you're genuinely characterized by the humility of Christ.** The presence of humility is the evidence of Jesus rule because humility is what characterizes the mind of our King. More than anything, citizens of God's Kingdom are humble. **Humility is simply this—counting others more significant than your-self because Christ did that for you.** It is not thinking that you are less than others, but simply thinking about yourself less.

But it is more than just thinking. Christ's humility was efficacious, meaning, it was not merely a state of mind it was active—it had effect and changed to state of us. **Jesus humbled himself by giving himself out of love. But he didn't simply love us so that we would feel good about ourselves.** It was a greater love.

He loved us by emptying himself of all power, prosperity, and all prestige **that we might be reconciled with God—this was the goal of His love.** **In other words, self-sacrifice is still for self if it is intended to makes us feel good more than lead others to Christ.**

Genuine Christ inspired, Christ empowered, and Christ modeled humility is sacrificial love that is devoted to building God's Kingdom. That is our mission. **YOU DO NOT LOVE JESUS AS SAVIOR IF YOU DO NOT SERVE HIM AS KING. AND YOU DO NOT SERVE HIM AS KING UNLESS YOU LOVE OTHERS LIKE JESUS (His rule has its effect...if Jesus suddenly ceased to rule, what would change?) It should impact our love and transform it to be a love like Christ...**

1. Love that is **Physical** – tangible giving just as Jesus bled and died for us
2. Love that is **Emotional** – genuine giving just as Jesus imagined the joy of us as he died
3. Love that is **Volitional** – willful giving just as Jesus willfully chose to die
4. Love that **Spiritual** – ultimate giving just as Jesus died so that we might live

CONCLUSION |

More than our morality, more than our service, our love is the evidence of our heavenly citizenship. What king rules your inner heart, will be the king who rules your outer life. Every earthly king that has ever lived will demand you prove your devotion. But there is only one King who came and proved His devotion to us. Communion is a confession of that conviction.

Romans 8.31-39 ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.