

Cherished-Chosen-Challenged – December 19, 2010

Follow the King

Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered him, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?” Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” John 18:33-37

In his sermon last Sunday for the 75th Anniversary of Grace Lutheran Church, Pastor Paul Ludwig encouraged us to continue the celebration of God’s miracles and to “follow the King!” He did so because he knows where the King is leading. All those who follow Jesus our Savior believing in Him are headed for eternal glory in heaven with Him. On such a joyful and auspicious occasion we can rise with our fellow believers and say: “I will follow the King!” In essence, that is just what all those who were baptized and all those who joined Grace actually did....they confessed with their fellow believers that they too were followers of the King.

But what does it really mean to follow the King? As we go about our daily business in this world, we may well find that is not such an easy thing to do. There have been those who have boldly proclaimed that they will follow Jesus...wherever He might lead, but the riches and cares of this life became too tempting for them to overcome and they fell away. After Jesus fed the 5,000, the crowds wanted to seize Him and make Him their King...but Jesus knew their hearts and minds were set on worldly gain and when He told them unless they would eat of His flesh and drink of His blood they had no part in Him many of them left because accepting that God had come in the flesh was too hard for them. They wanted the worldly kingdom. King Herod also thought the Child born according to the

prophecy would be an earthly King and would challenge him for his throne. The murder of all male children two years of age and under in Bethlehem and all its districts at the behest of King Herod was an act of self preservation on his part. Herod did not wish to surrender his earthly kingdom. Even Pontius Pilate was sizing up Jesus. Was He a King? And if so, was He a threat to Rome? Acting for the preservation of the earthly kingdom was a top priority for Pilate. It was his charge and duty. The sign on the cross of Jesus read: "Jesus of Nazareth-King of the Jews." Following this King could bring you death...the message was clear.

In all this misery and mystery the heart of faith sees the truth. Dying to the things of this world may be too large of a sacrifice for many because they do not understand the bliss and peace of the Kingdom ruled by the King of Kings. Their heart finds the treasure of the things passing away too precious to part with...worldly greatness and gain are all they desire. However, following the King does not bring death...it brings life! The King of Kings born in Bethlehem and worshipped by royalty and commoners alike came to usher in the Kingdom of peace between God and man. He calls all men to follow Him though in the journey they will have to bear the cross of shame and mockery for His name's sake. He calls them to the eternal Kingdom of His grace and glory in which they will be eternally cared for by their gracious King. How wonderful it is to be citizens of such a kingdom...a kingdom ruled by grace, known as the communion of saints and characterized by the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting! Celebrate in the midst of worldly troubles...indeed! For Christ our Savior and King is born in Bethlehem! Come one and all—let us continue the celebration! Let us follow the King...through whatever we must endure and wherever He may lead...for we also know that He will finally bring us to the glory of life everlasting in heaven!

Pastor Jacobs

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