
The King Shows His Power (Luke 23:35-43)
A Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow



What is a king without power? What is any leader without power? If the president had no power, would anyone care at all about voting? If a king has no power, they are not a king.

So why then, on *Christ the King* Sunday, do we see Christ the King in such a powerless position, with rulers, soldiers, and even condemned criminals laughing at him? This question will be the focus of our sermon today as we look at our lesson from Luke. Today, the King Shows His Power. And though the world laughs at it, we will be saved by it.

So, where do we see our King show his power in this gospel lesson? Picture the scene again. Jesus, beaten, bloodied, hanging on a cross; it is very likely that he even hung there naked. There's no power there; only weakness.

Above his head, there was an inscription fastened to Jesus' cross which read, "This is the King of the Jews." Surely that shows the King's power! That sign said clearly to everyone that Jesus had not been found guilty of anything. He is the King, and that is why he was crucified. It's not fair. That statement about Jesus certainly shows no power, because what does his innocence get him except for more shame and mockery?

The Jewish leaders laughed at Jesus. This is the King!? He saved others, but look! He can't even save himself! If he can't even come down from the cross, if he can't even save himself, can he really save anyone else?

The soldiers laughed at him. This is a king? This bloodied naked mess, this laughing stock is a king? Come on, oh great king! Show us your kingly power and come down from the cross.

Even the criminals, and Matthew and Mark record that both criminals made fun of Jesus. Even these two people who were dying a horrible death just like Jesus, suffering the slow death on a cross, even these two got in on the gag. Yeah, this joke of a king! He's no better than us. Save yourself, great king, and save us too while you're at it!

Even today, the world still laughs at the King. The world laughs at a King who could make a world in 6 days. Impossible! It had to have taken billions of years! The world laughs at a King who claims to love us and yet seems to have so little power to save his people. Christians suffer all kinds of horrible things. If that is the power the King has, no thank you. The world laughs at a King who has promised that he will come again. The world has gone on just like it always has! This King isn't going to return.

The world is not impressed with this King who dies. This world does not care for this King's commands. This King seems to have no power in this world; bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people, so why should his power be feared?

Look at the world today. So few people care about King. So few care about obeying the King's commands! It seems the world is falling farther and farther away from the King. And what does he do about it? It seems that the King really doesn't have any power.

Perhaps, even we are tempted to doubt the King's power. When we hear the commandments, do we tremble at the thought of the King's punishment? Or do we not feel the need to fight against sin? After all, Jesus will forgive me, so what's the big deal? Do we respect the King and his commands, or are they just you know, something for us to hear again every once in a while? Are we concerned with obeying the King's commands, or are we content to simply complain about the world around us that doesn't seem to care?

If we care so little to obey the King's laws, even if we tell ourselves it's ok because Jesus, are we not mocking the King? If we claim to follow this King and yet are fine with lives that don't follow the King's commands, aren't we, really, just as bad as these people who stood at Jesus' cross and laughed at the dying King?

Make no mistake, one day, the King will show all his power. One day, at the sound of the trumpet, Jesus will be revealed as the one true King of heaven and earth and every eye will see him; those who laughed at the King, those who considered the King's commands to not be a priority, those who ignored his coming power. Every eye will see Jesus. Every tongue will confess Jesus is King. And every

mouth will be silenced as we recognize that the King's just condemnation of this world is right.

But if that is the power that the King will one day show, why do we see him so powerless now? Why does the King allow the world to laugh at him? Why does the King allow people to ignore him now? Why does the King seem so powerless?

Open your eyes, because the King does show his power, and though the world laughs at it, we will be saved by it. Remember again, our King hanging on that cross, silently enduring all the insults and laughter. Remember the rulers, soldiers, and even the condemned criminals laughing at the King.

But notice, that one of the criminals suddenly turns quiet. His laughter dies away, the pained smile fades from his face. His mind is working. He sees that there is no charge against the King. He sees the King suffering, struggling even to breathe. He sees the King silently endure the mockery without the slightest desire to talk back. Instead, he hears the King quietly say, "Father, forgive them..."

His eyes go wide as he sees the King *IS* showing his power! Everyone was laughing at how the King was powerless to come down from the cross, but in reality, it was the King's true power that *kept* him on that cross! Our King created the very nails and cross that then held his body in place. Simple metal and wood could not have held the very Creator of the world!

No, the King showed his mighty power by staying on that cross. The King showed his almighty power by dying on that cross. And the King showed his absolute almighty power by whispering these few words to a condemned and nameless criminal who had just moments ago laughed at the One True King. The King told this criminal, "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

This is the King's power even to this day. The King is even now showing his almighty power by promising paradise to the likes of you and me, those who have ignored the King's commands, those who have treated the King like he was powerless, those who have even laughed at the King.

Even now, as we look out at a world that seems to be falling further and further out of the grip of the King's power, he still shows his power by bringing

forgiveness to a world that laughs at him. Even now, throughout the world, there are more criminals who used to laugh at the King, who are now praying that he remember them in his kingdom. Even now, the King is promising the lowliest criminals of this world that they will be with him in paradise.

Do not be fooled like the rest of the world. In their eyes, the King looks powerless. His subjects look weak, and his kingdom seems like it will never come. But we, as subjects of the King, we will defend our King, not because he needs our defense! In the same way that God used his power to keep himself on that cross instead of coming off, God allows this world to keep laughing at him for now.

Instead, we will defend our King because we know his power. We know his absolute almighty power which has forgiven us and promised us paradise. We know the power of his promise which will save us from the day when his power to judge will be revealed! We will therefore defend the King against this laughing world. We will take his commands seriously and obey them. We will not ignore God but hear when he speaks. And we will stand in awe as the King Shows His Power. Amen.