

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This notion of the kingship of Jesus seems rather quaint to the American ear. It is so foreign to our way of thinking. Yet, it was the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, who first raised the question of Jesus' kingship. In the continuing dialogue Jesus affirms his kingship: "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Presuming that we are those "who belong to the truth listening to his voice," today we might ponder what it means to proclaim Jesus as our King.

Really the notion of Kingship is not completely foreign to our American sensibilities. Every Sunday as I travel between our various worship sites I try to catch the Elvis station on Sirius radio because I love listening to "the King of Rock & Roll" sing Gospel music.

Recently friends who live in Nashville told me of taking their children to visit Memphis where Elvis is basically enshrined as the King. They told of visiting the Sun Records studio where Elvis recorded his first song. In the studio, there was an "X" marked on the floor with duct tape indicating the exact spot where Elvis stood. The tour guide told them that she had witnessed Bob Dylan coming into the studio and without uttering one word, walked over to the "X", got down on his hands and knees, kissed it, and walked out. Now that's truly a tribute from one rock legend to the one proclaimed as "The King".

My friends then moved on to visit Graceland, Presley's home. As she waited in line to buy tickets, the mother asked a tour guide, "So, how long did Elvis actually live here?" There was an audible gasp from the surrounding crowd. In shock, the guide whispered, "We don't use the past tense here," pointing to her t-shirt, which read, "Graceland, Where Elvis Lives".

The tour guide was way too young to have ever seen Elvis since he had died more than 40 years ago. Most of the people there had never seen him. It didn't matter. They didn't care. As far as they were concerned, "He lives!" "The King lives!"

What's important here, whether his fans believe he is actually still alive or not, they proudly proclaim the message of the King. They play his music, dress up as impersonators, and decorate their homes with Elvis memorabilia. One item sold in the gift shop at Graceland, my friend told me really made her laugh, was a foot-high plastic sprinkler of Elvis in a sequin jumpsuit, and as he watered your lawn, he would swivel his hips.

Now, I'm not suggesting that on this Feast of Christ the King you should all go out and buy a plastic Jesus, but the question each of us might ponder today is "Who is your King?"

Everybody worships something or somebody. One of the most perceptive theologians of the 20th Century, Paul Tillich, once said, that whatever is our ultimate concern in life, that

is our God, or, our King, if you will. It might be your appearance or your social status; it could be your financial well-being or your lack thereof; it might be the President or political party affiliation some popular media personality or even family; it might be allegiance to our country, or to the quest for scientific truth, or a host of important concerns.

What is it in life that you most value—that you would not only die for, but also live for? Be careful how you answer. This really is a most difficult question.

Some may say my faith is what matters most in my life. Yet, when the time comes that your faith is tested, are you too embarrassed to speak up for Christ or your Church or your belief? If so, might your greatest concern be the esteem of your peers?

Others may say that it is their families that matter most in their lives. That's good, but the question becomes do you value your family more than you value God? Tough call, isn't it?

There are still some others who would never admit it, but there are a whole lot of us who most value our stuff—more stuff, bigger stuff, better stuff, or just plain old my stuff. How else can you explain that more than four billion dollars worth of stuff was sold on what they call Black Friday? Four billion dollars spent in just one day! Amazing!

There are studies that show far more people in this country are willing to die for their country than they are for their faith. That is very revealing. Who is your king? Who or what do you worship?

A pastor tells of a man in his parish who had a stunning vision of the presence of the risen Christ that was so vivid as to be undeniable. But he never told anyone about it for more than ten years. Yet, all that time, the vision haunted him. He was too embarrassed to tell anyone. He was afraid people would think he was nuts or laugh at him or mock him. He never even told his wife.

Then he told his pastor, "The real reason I never told anyone before now was because I was too afraid it was true. And if it's true that Jesus is really real, that he had come personally to me, what then? I'd have to change my whole life. I'd have to become some kind of radical or something. I love my life. I love my wife and children. I love my plans for my future, watching my children grow up and become successful, looking forward to a happy retirement when my wife and I could travel and do all the things we always wanted to do. I was scared I would have to change; everything would have to change, if the vision was real."

Wow, that's a powerful thought! If Jesus is real and we should encounter him, what are the implications of that experience? If He really is not just the King of the Universe, but my King whom I serve first and foremost, what would have to change in my life?

Just two months before he was assassinated, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was preaching in his beloved Ebenezer Baptist Church where he, and his father before him and after him, had pastored. Speaking of his own life, he said, “If Christ is ruler over our lives, then my Nobel Peace Prize is less important than my trying to feed the hungry. If Christ is King, then my invitations to the White House are less important than that I visited those in prison. If Christ is Lord, then my being TIME magazine’s “Man of the Year” is less important than I tried to love extravagantly, dangerously, and with all my heart.”

Dr. King was right. If Christ is real; if He is King; then we know that we can trust him with our families, with our personal destinies, with everything and everybody who is important to us. We can face the future confidently, even triumphantly, if Christ is King.

On July 20, 1969, Astronaut Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon saying, “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” Some years later when visiting Jerusalem, standing at the Hulda Gate which leads up to the Temple Mount, he wanted to know if Jesus had walked on those very steps. Assured that he had, Armstrong said, “I have to tell you, I am more excited stepping on these stones than I was stepping on the moon.” Why was he so excited? He was acknowledging that Christ is King of all creation...the moon, the sun, the earth, and all it holds.

Everybody worships something or somebody. Ultimately, if we do not worship Christ, we worship ourselves. The only problem with that is that we cannot save ourselves. We honor Jesus Christ today as King of the Universe. The questions before each of us, “Is Jesus Christ king of my life? Does it matter? How does it show?”