

Coronation Day

By Mike Glodo

Well, it's a pleasure to be with you. I find that key to success is usually lowering expectations, but, but I'll deal with David's graciousness as I can. Thank you, David, your dear brother. Our scripture text for this morning comes from Matthew's Gospel, the 27th chapter, and I'll be reading from the New American Standard Version, which is your church's traditional version. But you'll pardon me later if I happen to accidentally quote from other translations without any intention behind it. Matthew 27 beginning at the 27th verse:

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and a reed in his right hand, and they knelt down before Him and mocked him, saying, Hail King of the Jews, they spat on him and took the reed and began to beat him on the head. After they had mocked him, they took the scarlet robe off him and put his own garments back on him and led him away to crucify him as they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear his cross. When they came to a place called Golgotha, which means place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall. And after tasting it, he was unwilling to drink it. And when they had crucified Him, they divided up the garments among themselves by casting lots and sitting down, they began to keep watch over him there and above his head, they put up the charge against him, which read, this is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

You have heard this portion of God's Word. Read, we need the Holy Spirit's help to receive this word. Will you pray with me, O Lord, by your spirit? Would you open our eyes to see wonderful things in your law, for apart from your spirit, we do not recognize the truth. We also pray your spirit would convince us and convict us in such a way that we would believe these words to be trustworthy, like Ezekiel, valley of dry bones breathe in us Your Spirit so that our dry bones might live. And we pray, in the end, Lord, we would not simply be hearers of your word, but doers as well. So, by your Spirit, help us to bear fruit with his word. We pray all these things in the name of Christ our Savior, amen.

So, two years ago, the world witnessed something and hadn't seen for nearly 70 years. And I bet many of you watched it. It was the coronation of a British monarch. How many watched at least part of the coronation of Charles? Not a lot of Brit watchers. But you knew it happened, right?

Queen Elizabeth, the second after her 70 year distinguished reign, died, and Charles was crowned king in her place, and in a world where we say everything with a smirk, everything's tongue in cheek, nobody wants to take things too seriously, or else you'll be considered naive or passe, the pageantry and the ceremony of that event caused even cynical people to get a little moisture in their eyes a bit.

And the pageantry of the coronation, if you watched it, include the singing of vivat Rex, Carolus, long live Charles. The coronation itself took place in a church in Westminster Abbey, and then there was a procession to the palace, Buckingham Palace, where the king appeared on the balcony as tradition and presented himself to the public for the first time as king, king of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth realms. Well, the reason I mention this is we have in our text this morning, a different kind of coronation.

It's coronation, no doubt. It takes place in a palace. There is Royal Guard assembled. There are clothing and instruments of royal reign presented, but they're all presented to Jesus in a very cynical, sarcastic, mocking kind of way. And it seems, from the standpoint of the disciples and everyone else, frankly, that rather than this being a coronation of Jesus's King. It was, on the other hand, more like a humiliation, a massive defeat, the end of hopes and expectations.

But I want us to look a little more closely at the text this morning. I want us to listen more to what Matthew has written, and we're going to see that this travesty, and it is a travesty, no mistake about it, from a human perspective, this travesty is at the same time, the crowning of King Jesus in certain respects. Yes, he was raised from the dead. Yes, he was exalted to the right hand of God every eye that beheld him beheld him, ascend into the heavens, and one day he will descend, and every eye literally will behold Him. But this itself is no less a coronation than those events. By the time we're done, I would like you to have looked at this text and understood that Jesus Christ ascended to His throne, by being crucified, and that means for you and me, we must bow before him by embracing the cross. He was crowned through crucifixion, and this means we bow before His cross. So let's look at the text.

First, the king's coronation in verses 27 to 31. We're told there that the soldiers of the governor, (these are the soldiers of Pilate) took Jesus into the Praetorium, which was the official governor's residence. Pilate was a representative of Caesar, the emperor of the whole world of the day. So this is an official royal or imperial action, the king's coronation, but it's a mock coronation. He's presented with a gown that's a or a robe which is Scarlet, a royal cover color. But his crown is one of thorns, and there's probably some intentionality of the of the spikes in the in the thorny crown, resembling the kind of light that would emanate from Caesar's crown and depictions of Caesar.

But yet these weren't emanations of light. They were emanations of pain and curse. And he's given a scepter, but it's not a scepter of a precious wood or precious metal. It's a reed staff. It's a common stick. And they bow before him, and they say, in the Greek, hail, which is a greeting that the crowds would yell out to Caesar. This is a coronation, no doubt, but it's a certain kind of coronation.

By saying it's the king's coronation, I want us to see that it's Caesar's cynical bow to Christ. But while it's Caesar's cynical bow to Christ, it is God's sovereign purposes being accomplished. It's an imperial action.

As I said, the guard acted on behalf of Caesar, and in fact, the previous passage about Barabbas shows the politics involved. The last thing Pilate wants Caesar to hear is there are problems in Judea, and Judea was a restive province of the Roman Empire, and so everything's being done with imperial power. In verse 24 Pilate claimed innocence, but he can't plead innocence, can he? He shared the blame, along with the Jewish leaders and the Jewish crowd, but Caesar was crucifying Christ.

Jesus was there humanly speaking, because the religious leaders had too much to lose. The political leaders didn't want things to spin out of control. In fact, the people made a devil's bargain with Caesar. "You let us be quiet and subservient servants of Caesar, and we will participate in your power play by punishing Christ." But this is all from a human point of view, because there is this coronation of cosmic significance.

The early first century, people would have recalled Psalm 2: "Why do the heathen rage? Why do the kings of the earth take counsel against whom, against the Lord and His anointed?"

The very first creed or symbol of the church, the earliest of the creeds of the church that we still confess today, adopted officially and finally in the late fourth century, the Apostles' Creed. And there's a line in the apostles' creed that says that Jesus was crucified. Under Pontius Pilate.

This is not just one provincial governor doing an unjust action, but the early church understood even as Imperial Rome prepared to embrace the Christian faith, that they laid down a marker that said, "Caesar is always going to be threatened by King Jesus." But this is exactly why Jesus was crucified under imperial power, because Jesus comes in the end to reign supremely as King of kings, the King above all other kings, because in his coronation here, he's moving toward that enthronement by dying for the sins of His people. You see his kingship moves toward the redemption of his people.

They took the reed from his hand and they struck him with it.

And yet sovereignty was not removed from the hand of Jesus. I'll say that again. They took the reed from his hand, a symbol of kingly power, a mocking symbol of kingly power, and struck him with it. And yet the scepter was not removed from the hand of Christ, the second person of the Godhead.

He had told his disciples earlier in chapter 16 that all of this would happen, and it would happen according to God's purposes and intentions. So you have this mock coronation that is really God moving toward the completion, the fulfillment of His eternal purposes, just like Pharaoh in the book of Exodus, Pilate and Caesar are no less guilty, but just like Pharaoh in the book of Exodus, God is in charge. God is in command and no less in command in the person of Christ Himself, in the book of Acts.

Peter brings this out when he says to the Jewish leaders, he says this, Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified. This is a profound statement. The very worst thing that ever happened in the history of the world was God's sovereign purpose for the salvation of his people. In fact, the only way to reconcile the awful, awful things in the world are the goodness and the power and the sovereignty of God in the cross of Christ, where God took the worst thing and used it to his great sovereign purposes to save for Himself a people.

This reminds me, as they mock Him, of what happened in Joshua chapter five.

Joshua and the Israelites are getting ready to enter the Promised Land, and Joshua goes out on reconnaissance to check out Jericho. And as he's going along the way, he encounters this man standing with a flaming sword in his hand. Joshua thinking like we would think, says, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" And the answer from the man with a flaming sword is, "no." See, Joshua had this zero-sum game view of power and authority, in the world, just like Caesar did, that somehow you've got to figure out, Is God on our side?

Bob Dylan sang a song about that, didn't he? Is God on our side? And the question comes right back to us, are we on God's side? You know, in the best times of the world, Caesar is a friend to King Jesus. Timothy in First Timothy 2 says, "first of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."

But at worst, Caesar is an enemy, an overt, direct enemy. First Peter 3 talks about this. We live in an interesting time where, on the one hand, religion is on the way in the broader culture. On the other hand, religion is being invoked by those who want our support. And no matter which way the river of society winds and winds, it must be King Jesus who is our sovereign. It's he who is the source of true power and authority. Zechariah, 46: "Not by might, not by power, but by

My Spirit, says the Lord.” The Psalm says, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we remember the name of the Lord our God.”

The psalmist says, to trust in God as king, being wise as serpents and innocent as doves, to recognize in the coronation of King Jesus that it was the cross in which God wields true divine power and justice.

So, there's the king's coronation. Then in verses 32 and 34 there's the king's procession. We see that as they went out, they found a man of Cyrene Simon, by name, compelled him to carry his cross, that is Jesus' cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means a place of the skull, this is the king's procession, meaning the way to Christ's crown, is the way of the cross. For us, that means to follow Christ is to follow the way of the cross.

Let's think about this for a minute. The way of the cross is the way of Christ. First of all, we see a scene change in the very opening. Words, as they were going out, they're on the road. Where are they on the road to Golgotha. It's a hill named after the Aramaic word for skull, generally thought to be because of the shape of the place. The Latin word calvaria means skull, which is where we get Calvary.. It's the place of the skull. And of course, it's ominous because it is going to be the place of Christ's death. It's notable because they're going outside the city of Jerusalem, and Hebrews 13 verse 12 reminds us that Christ was crucified outside the city, not on Mount Zion, not in the temple where the kings of Israel had been crowned for centuries.

But as an outcast, this reflects the practice of the scapegoat in the book of Numbers and the Day of Atonement in Leviticus, where of two goats chosen on the Day of Atonement, one would have the hands of the priest laid upon it to represent the sins of the people being laid on that animal, and it will be taken out of the wilderness and abandoned to become cursed as a substitute for the sins of God's people, for which They would be cursed.

And he's offered on the way, a drink. It's described as wine mixed with gall, but it says when he tasted it, he wouldn't drink it. What's going on there? We know later, and you'll hear about this, presumably, next Sunday. When Jesus was hung on the cross, bitter wine was put to his lips. And I'll leave it to Pastor David to explain that the significance of that, but we're not there yet.

What is the significance of this? Well, for somebody ready to be crucified and to have to carry their cross to the place of crucifixion, they needed some degree of strength and willingness and ability. And sometimes in these kind of situations, bitter herbs would be mixed with wine, and those herbs would be a sort of an analgesic, a pain reliever. And so a Persian in such extreme circumstances of suffering would be offered, ironically, a drink that would strengthen them for the purpose of being further abused. But we see in the case of Jesus, he refuses the drink.

He feels the pain he suffers. He suffered as a man without any relief from his suffering.

The way of the cross is the way of Christ, but the way of the cross is also the disciple's way when there's this man, Simon of Cyrene. We don't know much about him. In Mark's gospel, his sons are mentioned. So, because of what happened here, he becomes someone of note within the early Christian community.

We're told that they compelled this man to carry the cross. The same word is used back in Matthew five, if anyone forces you to go a mile with them, go two miles. Jesus said it's the same word. It reflects a certain kind of practice where a powerful person could compel a slave or some lesser person to bear a burden for them, sort of a temporary temporarily drafting someone for labor. And so, Simon of Cyrene is called to do this, presumably by the Roman soldiers, to do this for Jesus.

It's interesting that his name is Simon, isn't it?

Not Simon Peter the disciple.

It's not Simon Peter the one who in Matthew 16, when he heard Jesus speak of the necessity of his rejection, suffering, death, crucifixion, resurrection - remember Simon Peter said, "No, may it not be" because it was so contrary to Peter's expectation, and to many of the people of that day, that this is Jesus. This way of becoming king was totally the opposite of what people expected. And Jesus said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan."

You see, it's satanic to think that crown comes without cross. This is Caesar's idea. You get crowned by power, by brute force. But this is not God's way. Kingdom only comes - Crown only comes through the cross, and Jesus told Peter. He said, "Before the crow, before the cock, the rooster crows three times you'll deny me."

And Peter said, "No way."

And as Peter was outside the household of Caiaphas, the priest, remember somebody said, "Hey, I recognize you. You were with him."

Peter said, Simon Peter said, "I don't know the man."

Well, there's an irony in that statement. Isn't there?

Because he didn't know the man, because he thought the man was not someone who was willing to fulfill the father's purposes by going to the cross He laid. He learned, didn't he? He learned by the grace and mercy of Christ.

But Simon of Cyrene is different. He's there with Jesus. So what? What's the consequence? He's called to carry the cross too, and Jesus, in fact, said this back in Matthew 16. He said, "If anyone wants to follow me, if anyone wants to save his life, he has to lose it. He has to take up his cross and follow Me."

There's no way to follow Jesus which doesn't go through the cross. What do I mean by that? Well, it means, first of all, admitting that you're a sinner and that you need Christ's death on the cross for your sin.

But it doesn't stop there. You see, Jesus didn't just die to pay bail for us and then send us on our way.

Jesus died to become king, to reign over us personally. And so the way of the cross is not just Jesus', necessary way. The way of the cross is the disciples' necessary way. He is a cross bound Savior, and we are bound to Him through baptism, having died with him and been raised with Him now to walk with Him. So the cross is the call of Christian living, not just the instrument of our atoning sacrifice.

And this includes not just overt suffering for us.

I had a prayer request right for right before a class two weeks ago tomorrow where one of my students from Egypt came up to me and he said, "I have a dear friend in Christ who's a Christian living in Syria. And she asked me to ask you if the Muslim terrorists who are now killing Christians by the dozens in northern Syria, if they come and ask her if she's a Christian, what should she say? Because anyone who was admitting they were a Christian was being executed immediately."

This was happening just in the last few weeks in parts of Syria. It's happening around the world every day. Brothers and sisters are dying for Christ, and if we are called to, we pray that we might have the grace to do so as well. But for us, it's the little deaths that we're called to. It's the self-denials. It's the putting others, the needs of others first. It's thinking not more highly of ourselves than we ought but being of sober minds.

Because Christ Himself, who existed in the form of God, did not hold on to his privileges, but became a servant. So we have the king's coronation, which calls us to bow before the cross. We have the king's procession, which calls us to follow in His cross shaped path.

The last thing I would like us to see is the king's conquest, and this is in the last two verses of our text, my translations in verse 35 says, "And when they had crucified Him..." wait, did I miss something? Did they bury the lead? No, we'll get to that next week. This is just a very short summary in order to tell us more, but we'll get the details next week in the next passage.

The king's conquest, you see, is found most explicitly on the cross, because when they had crucified Him and divided his garments, they put a sign over his head on the cross, which read: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." His claim to be the king of the Jews is what was the charge against him by the religious leaders of his day. It was the basis on which Caesar's representative Pilate convicted Jesus and sentenced him to death, and now to remove any doubt, it's put above his head on the cross.

Typically, when somebody was sent to be crucified, they would be attached to a cross beam and this is what Jesus was carrying along the way. But then when they arrived at the place of crucifixion, then they were hoisted up to vertical members, and so he's suspended there, and we know from other gospels the nails that were used to attach him and the abuse he suffered on the cross, but the sign above his head was as clear as day: "King of the Jews." This is what happens to someone who claims to be God's king.

But you see, while the Roman soldiers meant it ironically, they knew not what they said, did they?

Because this is the way in which Christ would triumph over sin and death. In John, chapter 12, when the hour comes, Jesus said, "Now will the ruler of this world be cast down." Colossians 2 tells us that he put to shame the powers of the world.

Jesus was blowing up death on the cross. This was not a tackle behind the line of scrimmage, requiring a punt until the resurrection. This was not a setback, so that Jesus could fight another day in the resurrection, going to the cross was the power move of God toward kingship through Christ, because on the cross, he was destroying the power of death. He was bearing the curse of sin for his people.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we were told that "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." Paul quotes that in Galatians 3 that he's the cursed one on the cross, but by bearing the curse, he is manifesting his crown.

This is not defeat.

In fact, this is what Christian victory looks like. Peter said in his sermon that all the house of Israel therefore knows for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. This Jesus, whom you crucified. You see, there's an irony here.

Caesar's guards are keeping watch. Now, the word for watch there is literally guard. It's not like Jesus needed to be protected, protected from them, but they subsequently don't. They in God's great irony, subsequently become witnesses to not only the death, but the burial of Jesus.

This was not man's doing. This was God's doing. He truly was the king of the Jews. The plaque over Jesus head, it's like a name and a mug shot from the standpoint of the soldiers. But for us, it's the announcement of our King, the one who we trust for the forgiveness of our sins and the one we are willing to follow daily, dying to self.

So, as to the king's coronation, Caesar's cynical bow is actually God's sovereign will. We bow at the cross - the king's procession. The way of Christ's crown is the cross, and therefore it is the way of all those who would follow Christ as King and the king's conquest. Christ wore the crown upon the cross, which means, if we bow to him as Savior, we must also bow to Him as King.

I mentioned King Charles the Third a year ago in May. So coming up on almost a year he was present at the unveiling of his first official portrait since he had been crowned as king. So when the king or queen becomes crowned, there's a portrait commissioned, and there was an artist named John Yo who went off and painted this portrait. Charles had sat for it a couple of years earlier in anticipation of it. And there's a ceremony in which the king is present and he's shown his portrait for the first time. And like everything that's ever happened in the world, ever, you can watch this on YouTube, and it shows Charles. It's a great high portrait. And he reaches up and he pulls off the cover that's on the portrait. And when he does, you can see he kind of winces, and a lot of people interpreted that as well, that in how the portrait looked, it was that he was shocked and perhaps didn't care for it at all.

He explained later, or explained, and tried to divert the questions by just saying he was being self-deprecating. But if he was shocked, it no doubt had to do with the portrait. The whole background is this overwhelming, almost psychedelic red, all the swirling colors, and the color reflects the traditional military uniform that King Charles wears. It's the Welsh guard's uniform. You would recognize it. One video posted on X commented, "He freaked out when he saw himself, because you have this red swirling background abstract, and it just kind of bleeds into the foreground, which causes you to look intently at Charles's face."

The artist explained that the intense red colors, again, reflecting the Welsh guard uniform, were intended to highlight the face of Charles. Well, we have such a portrait here in Matthew's Gospel, you have this intense suffering, perhaps represented by the redness of the fury, and not just the fury, but the blood that was being shed, but all that intense fury and blood should draw our attention to the face, as it were, of a king.

Some of you might have what's called a Red Letter Bible. I've had red letter Bibles. You know what a Red Letter Bible is? It's a Bible in which the words of Jesus are printed in red and people rightly issue concerns or qualifiers. We shouldn't read the words of Jesus as any more inspired than all the other words of the Bible, so they don't. The words of Jesus don't have greater weight than any other divinely inspired Word in Scripture. However, I'm not so worried about the Red Letter Bible. I guess, in light of this text, I would say we need to be concerned about what I might call the yellow highlighter Bible, the ways in which we selectively look at who Jesus is and only highlight the things that affirm what we think he should be, or what we want to be, or what we want The World to be like.

And yet, when we actually look at the portrait painted for us, in Matthew's words this morning, we can't do that. We have to see him for who he is. He is the one who ascended to His throne by being crucified, which means we must bow to him by embracing his cross.

One prominent New Testament theologian said it this way: "In Christ, God maintains his royal rights and accomplishes his royal redemption. But this happens not only in Christ as the Son of Man, invested with all authority, but also in the Christ as the obedient servant, and in the Christ who suffers and dies for the many, the judgment and the redemption of the kingdom of heaven are not only brought about through him, but also brought about by him and in him."

Brothers and sisters on that day that day we've read about this morning, during that long six hour trial, as he sat in mock robes and mock crown and mock praise, Jesus was no less the king of creation than the moment every eye will see Him and Every knee will bow to him.

So we must bow before him at the cross.

Please pray with me.

Lord, forgive us when we make Jesus into our own image. Thank you that you made Him in the likeness of sinful flesh. Flesh, but without sin, so that he might be a fit Redeemer for us, but help us to believe in the Jesus, who is the Jesus witnessed to us by your apostles, so that he might not only be savior, but King in our lives, we pray in His name, amen.

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