

Resurrection Reality
King of Kings
April 3, 2011

Good morning everyone.

Today we are beginning a new series that will last through Easter Sunday, which is three weeks from today. And as I was thinking about how to approach this Easter season, it hit me that churches tend to do the same thing from year to year when it comes to Easter. A lot of times we focus on the death of Jesus in the weeks leading up to Easter, then we have a big celebration of His resurrection on Easter Sunday, then we move on to something else that applies to our daily lives. And there's nothing really wrong with that, but sometimes I think it gives the impression to people that the cross of Jesus is more important than the resurrection of Jesus.

But it's not. For without the resurrection - the literal rising from the dead - of Jesus, the cross is meaningless. It's just one more brutal execution by the Roman government of someone who they perceived to be a threat to their power.

... which is why the Apostle Paul wrote:

*If Christ has not been raised,
then all our preaching is
useless, and your faith is
useless ... if Christ has not
been raised, then your faith is
useless and you are still
guilty of your sins. 1
Corinthians 15:14,17 (NLT)*

Several years ago, I did a little bit of study on the use of the cross as a Christian symbol throughout history and I discovered something very surprising: the primary symbol of Christian faith in the first century

was *not* the cross. Did you know that? It was something called the Chi-Rho.

For example, this is a gravestone inside one of the catacombs in Rome where persecuted Christians hid out towards the end of the first century.

Chi-Rho symbol ↘



That's Peter on the left ("Petros" in the inscription) and Paul (or Paulos) on the right. Notice that the symbol between the two men is not a cross. It's the Chi-Rho, the transposition of two Greek letters Chi (which looks like an X) and Rho (which looks like a P).

Now, I could go into a long explanation of

why and how the Chi-Rho came to such prominence among the first followers of Jesus, but the bottom line is that the combination of the letters Chi and Rho became shorthand for a Latin phrase (and Latin was one of the languages that was popular during the Roman Empire).

Chi Rho became shorthand for “Christus Rex.”



... which means, “Christ the King ... Christ the Victor ... the one who has conquered all the powers of evil both *in this world* and *beyond this world* because he rose from the dead.” In the minds of the first followers of Jesus, *that* was what was most significant about Him. It was the *resurrection of Jesus* that gave the *cross of Jesus* its meaning.

So in the next four messages, I want us to focus on the resurrection and, specifically, what it means for you and me, personally.

Now, having said that, I should also say that we *are* going to focus on the Cross and what *it* means as well. And we're going to do that in a very special event on the Wednesday evening before Easter Sunday (April 20).

We're going to do what's called a Tenebrae service.

"Tenebrae" is another Latin word and it means "shadows" or "darkness" ... so, a Tenebrae service is a time to reflect on the darkness of sin and death, and to remember Jesus' descent into that through his crucifixion. It's a pretty somber and reflective service which includes candlelight and communion. It's a very moving experience. And it's the first time we've ever done it and I

think it would be a great, great thing if those of us who are followers of Jesus would fill this room that night to remember what He did for us.

And just so you'll know, childcare will be provided for kids through preschool ... and if you could let us know you need it by contacting our Children's Ministry Director, Michelle Muller, via The City or calling the office it would be most helpful.

Now, for today, as we begin thinking about the Resurrection, I want us to go back and look at the second part of the passage of scripture we saw on the screen right before we began this message. It was from the second chapter of Philippians. Paul wrote that ...

[Even] though he was God, [Jesus] did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

And, again, that's the part that we tend to think of the most when we think of Jesus and Easter – we think of the Son of God who became a man and came to the earth and went to the Cross for our sins.

But here's the second part of what Paul wrote and it's just as important.

Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name

above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth ...

... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NLT)

And Paul wrote that because not only did Jesus die as our savior, he rose as our King. And the greatest glory God will ever receive is on the day when everyone and everything literally bows down to Jesus as the King who, through his resurrection, conquered sin and death and hell.

Snapshots of Jesus

However, in this culture in which we live, whenever people think of Jesus *that is not* the image that comes to mind. Instead, we tend

to visualize Him in ways that *do* come from the Bible, but because we don't *also* think of Jesus as Christus Rex – Christ the King – those biblical images distort our perception of Him. And whenever your perceptions of God get off track, then all kinds of problems follow, as we learned in our recent series “Toxic Faith.”

So, let's take a look at four snapshots from the life of Jesus that evoke these distorted cultural images and I think you'll see what I mean.

The first is that of “cute little Jesus” lying in a manger.

It's the Christmas story, where everyone is looking at him saying “Oh, he's so cute, what a sweet baby” We've all seen the pictures, right? Jesus with a little glow and halo, and if he doesn't have one, Mary or Joseph does. Jesus, away in manger ... no crying he

makes ... and no poopy diapers, either.

And when you look at that scene, other than the fact that it is set in a stable, it doesn't look that much different from what you might see with any other family with a newborn baby, and family and friends gathering, saying, "how cute, how cute." And that's what this picture is all about, culturally speaking. Jesus is cute, but he is also weak, and totally dependent.

But there's one thing that he is *not* in this picture: *He's not any threat whatsoever to my self-centered living or to my comfort zone.* This Jesus is no threat at all to the way I live. And that's probably why our culture gets into Christmas a lot more than Easter. The "manger Jesus" – at least as we visualize him – doesn't require anything from us, really.

But the reality is very different from that. In the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, we read the story of the Magi – men who themselves were kings – who came across “field and fountain, moor and mountain,” bearing gifts. But they were not bringing gifts for a cute little newborn. They hadn’t gone online to see what was on Mary and Joseph’s gift registry. They understood from their study of the Hebrew prophecies and the signs they had seen in the heavens that a King had been born, so the gifts they brought – treasures gold, frankincense and myrrh – were fit for a king.

And to grasp the significance of their actions, you have to understand that, in that day, whenever one king would bring a heavy duty gift to another king, it wasn’t done to express friendship or appreciation. It was an attempt to buy that king off; to say, “I am submitted to you. You are higher than me.”;

to get on his good side basically. And when those kings came to see Jesus, even as a young child, that's what they were doing. They didn't want to wind up on the bad side of the one who had been prophesied to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Matthew goes on to tell us that when the Magi arrived, Herod, the guy who was King over Judea at the time, asked them what they were doing. They told him they were looking for the one who had been born the King of the Jews - that they had seen the star in the east and they wanted to come and worship him. Herod knew the prophecies of the Jews as well, so after the Magi left, he went on a killing rampage and killed every male child under the age of two in the region. Why? Because he didn't think of Jesus as being a "cute little baby." Fortunately, God had told Joseph and Mary to move on, so, Jesus, obviously, wasn't killed.

Let's move forward 30 some years in the life of Jesus and look at the second snapshot that is culturally popular.

**The second snapshot is “nice Jesus”
doing miracles and telling everyone else to
be nice.**

This is the Jesus with the long hippy hair who goes around wearing an old bathrobe. He's kind of a mix of Mr. Rogers and Ghandi with a little bit of superman power thrown in to fix things. He's totally cool to have on the scene. He wants to make sure everyone has a good time. You run out of wine for your party, he'll make more. You have an illness or a physical problem he'll heal you and make it better. Whenever there's any kind of problem, he'll fix it and say “y'all have a good time but, by the way, as you play in the sandbox, play nice, because it's all about being nice.”

But, again, this Jesus is absolutely no threat to me or to you. This Jesus – you have a problem and bring it to him and everything is wonderful. He's not only cute, now, he's nice.

But that's not the Jesus of the Bible because when you read the story of Jesus, sometimes he *didn't* fix everything. Actually, sometimes he was kind of rude.

In John chapter five there's a story of a guy who had been an invalid for 38 years. For 38 years the guy had not been able to move around on his own but, one day, Jesus heals him. And, it turns out it's on the Sabbath day, the day when you're not supposed to do any work. Jesus tells him to pick up his mat and walk. And the Pharisees are ticked off because the guy is "working" on the Sabbath. So they call the guy in and

question him, "Who healed you? Who told you to pick up your mat?" And of course they find out it's Jesus, and it's another reason to hate Jesus. Well, they let the guy go and as he leaves, he is walking through the temple, and Jesus is also walking through the temple. He goes up to Jesus and says to him, "Thank you so much for healing me." And Jesus says, "I'm glad to heal you, but here's the deal, quit sinning or something worse will happen to you!"

Now, because our image of Jesus is that he's so nice, we kind of ignore that. But, here is what's really going on, let me give you this scene (and some of you were here for this scene): last Wednesday evening at our potluck and worship service (and if you've never been to one of those, we eat dinner together, then gather in the auditorium to sing, and then we have people tell stories of how God is working in their lives – it's

wonderful), in the middle of that service the other night, a young man, Joseph Miller (who many of us have prayed for over the last several months) came up front here in his wheelchair, took the microphone and told us that he wanted to thank God because the treatments for his brain cancer were working and God was healing him. He was even able to stand up and walk around for us. And people were amazed, and we all applauded and praised God - it was just an awesome moment.

But what do you think the moment would have been like if I had said, "Wow, Joseph, that's awesome! Now, stop sinning or something worse will happen to you!" He would have been shocked. His parents would have been angry, to put it nicely. And everyone else in the church would have been freaking out and I would have been run out of town on a rail.

But that's what Jesus said to that guy he healed. And, I'm sure he had a good reason for doing so, it doesn't say in the bible. I'm sure he wasn't just throwing words around. But the point is, sometimes Jesus wasn't very "nice."

Then there's the story of the woman who was caught in the very act of committing adultery who gets dragged before Jesus. And the Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "The Law of Moses says we're supposed to stone her to death, Jesus? What say you?" And Jesus says, "Moses was right. Whoever here is without sin, let him throw first stone." And no one does. The accusers all walk away.

And we read that story and we go "Can you believe that? Aww, that Jesus is such a nice guy" ... except ... that Jesus then turns to the woman and says, "Don't sin again.

Goodbye.” No “how do you feel about this experience? What’s your family going to do or say?” Just boom – “don’t sin again. Goodbye.”

Now why did he do that kind of thing? Was he just trying to be mean? No, it’s because Jesus didn’t see himself as Mr. Fixit; he didn’t feel compelled to be Mr. Nice Guy to everyone. He saw himself as a king. And when a king walks in and speaks the truth, he expects everyone to listen. And that’s why Jesus sometimes did it that way.

But somehow, to us, Jesus has become nothing but cute and nice. Got a problem? “I’ll just bring it to Jesus and he’ll fix it and then I’ll go on with my life.”

In fact, to be honest about myself (and I think most of you could relate to where I am on this), a lot of times when I pray, most of my

prayers are really about, "Lord help me as I go on with my agenda in life. Fix this, please." Like, "Lord I'm having this problem with tendonitis in my arm, would you please fix that because I'd like to be able to play golf, I'd like to be able to play ball, I'd like to be able to pick up a jar of milk without it hurting. Help me to enjoy my life, and I'll just go on my merry way." Most of my prayers (and I'd bet most of yours) are not directed to Jesus as a king with his own agenda in this world that's more important than mine. In fact, my prayers are about me, because I'm the center of universe! And I'm sure some of you have the same issue.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. Jesus can and sometimes does fix things; Jesus *is* often nice and compassionate ... but, always, *always*, he does and says things as a king who expects to be taken seriously.

The third snapshot or image that a lot of people have in this culture is that of “co-dependent Jesus” on the cross.

You're thinking, "Wow, what does *that* mean?" As I said, the image of Jesus on the cross, that's kind of the universal image these days. It's the predominant symbol of Christianity in this culture. And for a lot of people, when you see Jesus on the cross, it carries with it the idea of Jesus saying "Well, I really don't want you to sin but, hey, if you do, don't worry, it's OK. Sin is no big deal because I've already picked up the tab for you." That's what the cross evokes in a lot of people.

That's why a lot of people think "I can live like hell because I have the cross, so I'm cool. I can live my own life my own way; I can do whatever and then, say, 'oh by the way, Jesus, I remember you dying on the cross, please forgive me' and then back on

my own way.”

It's almost like Jesus is co-dependent. You know what co-dependency is, right? We've talked about it on several occasions over the past few months. Co-dependency is when people keep on enabling your bad behavior so they have a reason to live, so they have a purpose in life. And in this image of Jesus, it's almost like He needs you to keep sinning so that he has a reason to live – or to die. He is just waiting for you to sin so that he can forgive you. Jesus is like a foolish father who bails you out time after time after time and never draws a line. He's co-dependent.

Now, I don't think anyone would say out loud that they actually believe that about Jesus, but how else do you explain the thought that “I can live like hell, run to the cross, live like hell, run to the cross because cute, nice, co-

dependent Jesus will say, 'it's ok, let's hold hands, sing kumbaya and I'll tuck you into bed. And then we can do it all over again tomorrow.'

Co-dependent Jesus, just like cute and nice Jesus is no threat at all to my self-centered living; no threat at all to my comfort zone.

But, again, the reality is so different. The death of Jesus on the cross doesn't mean that sin is no big deal. The death of Jesus actually means that sin is a *huge* deal. It's a capital offense worthy of capital punishment.

The Bible tells us that on the night he was betrayed, Jesus prayed to the Father "if there is any other way to deal with this sin of the world, would you let this cup pass from me." Then he prayed it again and then again. Three times he asked the Father and the Father's answer was "there is no other way.

To redeem the world, you must die. And not just like fall asleep and pass away in the middle of the night, you have to die a horrible death knowing that you are innocent; that you've done nothing to deserve what will happen to you. You've got to die for these people."

Sin is a huge deal to God.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying again. Jesus did give his life for our forgiveness and if you have turned to him as your savior, he has paid for every sin you ever have committed, every sin that you will commit, and sins that you don't even know you've committed. It's a done deal. But in return he says "Be my follower. Be my loyal subject. Take seriously what I take seriously." And he says that because not only is he a savior, he's also a king.

The final snapshot I want to look at is one that's actually associated with Easter Sunday and the resurrection.

It's "Spirit-in-the-Sky Jesus," "the ticket-to-heaven Jesus" who stands by the empty tomb.

You've seen this imagery, right? In this imagery Jesus is raising his hands; he's kind of glowing; Roman soldiers are looking in amazement, angels are all like "ahh."

And, the implication that a lot of people draw from that imagery is that "Jesus beat death, so that means all of us can, too. Everything is going to be OK. We don't have to worry when we die. We all get to go be in a better place no matter how we live because Jesus went before us to be the Spirit-in-the Sky, the ticket-to-heaven guy."

And, just like cute Jesus or nice Jesus or co-

dependent Jesus, *this* Jesus doesn't impact my self-centered choices or my comfort zone whatsoever. He's just gonna be there waiting for me when I die. And, until then, I really don't need to worry about anything else he said or did because that was his main purpose: making it possible for me and for you to get into Heaven someday.

The Real Jesus

Now, what's amazing about all these pictures and cultural images is that even though they have their roots in the scripture – I mean, Jesus *really* was a baby at some point; Jesus was a miracle-working teacher; Jesus *did die* on a Roman cross and Jesus *did rise* from the dead – even though they have their roots in the scripture, none of those images come close to representing what Jesus was truly like after the resurrection. In fact, the Bible says that after

the resurrection, the disciples had a difficult time recognizing Jesus until he showed them, "Here are the holes in my hands. Here's where the spear went into my side."

So, what does Jesus look like right now? Did you know that the Bible actually tells us? I'll give you a hint: he's not the surfer dude; he's *not the glowing guy in the bathrobe*. In fact, for close to 21 centuries now Jesus hasn't looked like any of the mental images we have of him.

Instead Jesus looks like this.

"Well, how do you know that, Rick? Are you just making that up?" No. This is what it says in the book of Revelation. The Apostle John had a vision one day. He said,

*Then I saw heaven opened,
and behold, a white horse!
The one sitting on it is called*

Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many [crowns]. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is "The Word of God."

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Who is this guy? It's Jesus. John says,

On his robe and on his thigh [he has a tattoo] he has a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

Revelation 19:11-16
(ESV)

This is the Jesus of Easter Sunday and beyond. This is the Jesus of the resurrection. This is the Jesus who one day soon is coming back as the King over this world and everything in it.

Now, that's not to say that Jesus isn't a caring and compassionate savior. That's not to say that we can't turn to him no matter who we are and no matter what we've done and receive forgiveness. It doesn't mean we need to cower in fear after we have come to him because now we might tick him off and he might change his mind about forgiving our sins and lash out at us. No, *it doesn't mean that at all.*

Instead, it means that Jesus' compassion

and forgiveness don't come from a position of, "You can just walk over me. I'm just a nice guy; I'm cute; I'm co-dependent." It comes from a position of power and strength; from the position of one who has the absolute right to judge and condemn anyone or anything that does not recognize his claim to authority. And it means that He is not the surfer dude with the long hair or the hippy in a bathrobe showing up at the party telling everyone to play nice. This is the king of kings prepared to go to battle for the Kingdom of God and for righteousness. This is a king you don't mess with.

Pastor Larry Osborne, one of my favorite authors, says that a lot of Christians struggle with this concept because we don't understand what it means to "fear the Lord."ⁱ He says a lot of us can't reconcile, in our brains, the idea of God being good enough to love and save those who turn to him and

follow him with the idea that He is also powerful enough to destroy those who refuse, so what we kind of want to do in our brains is we want to ignore that power part of who God is, the justice part of who God is, the righteousness part of who God is, and we want to focus on the loving and saving part because that makes us feel good.

But Osborne suggests that instead of doing that – instead of cutting off half of who Jesus is, we start thinking of him as being a lot like electricity. And you know how electricity is, right? Electricity is both good and dangerous at the same time. On the one hand, when it comes to electricity, you don't go around your house worrying and fearing that one day it's going to "get you"; that it's going to jump out of the wall and zap you because it's powerful and it can do that. On the other hand, you don't mess with it. You don't take a wire out of the wall and go, "what happens if

I do this?" You don't do that. You take it seriously because it can kill you if you don't. It's good but, it's also powerful, and only a fool doesn't fear it.

It works the same way with Jesus. Only a fool would believe that Jesus is cute, nice, codependent and the friendly Spirit in the Sky, ticket to Heaven guy, without also recognizing that he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now, practically speaking what does it mean to recognize that in our lives? What does it mean to recognize that Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What does that look like in your life. And, we could probably talk about this all day, but let me just give you two big ideas, two practical implications.

1. It means that Jesus is a king with an assignment for each of us.

He's a king with an assignment for each of us. He's not just sitting on his throne with people fanning him saying, "bring me another lemonade."

Jesus is a king; He has a Kingdom. And he has given those who have turned to him as savior an assignment to complete so that His Kingdom will expand on this earth.

Right before he ascended into Heaven; right before he returned to that glory (that we read about in Philipppians), the glory he laid down in order to become a human being, to become a servant and go to the cross, the Bible says that Jesus came to his disciples and said,

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of

the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

See, the assignment for you and me, if we belong to Jesus, if we've come to him as our savior, the assignment is that we go out into our world (whatever our world is) and we live in such a way that we draw other people to the king. And then, we don't just say, "oh, good, you made a nod to god; you like the king, too, kind of like we do." Jesus says no, you're to instruct these people in how to live the kingdom lifestyle and help them learn all the things that Jesus told us we're supposed to do.

That's our assignment as subjects of the king; as citizens of the Kingdom: we're supposed to go out and find new subjects

and help them live in that new lifestyle, that the power, that comes from believing in Jesus, brings to our lives. That's the first thing.

I think the second thing it means is to realize that ...

2. Jesus will judge and reward us based on how well we carry out His assignment.

See, the real Jesus of Easter isn't sitting there hoping everyone will say "wow, cool trick! You're back from the dead! Nice job!" Jesus is reigning as King of Kings and he's given you and me an assignment if we belong to him, and he's going to come back, the bible says, and judge and reward us for how well we do at carrying out that assignment.

Now, just to be clear (very clear, because we've spent many, many hours trying to get this right), this isn't coming back to make a

judgement of "okay, so you're good enough to be accepted by God now. You've done enough good things, so you're in." That's not what this is about at all. We know that's not possible. That's why Jesus died on the cross. Remember, Jesus lived the perfect life that you and I should live and then he died the death we are supposed to die so that we could be forgiven and live as free people for all eternity. So this is not that.

This is a judgement that is coming for Christians based on whether or not we take Jesus seriously as our King while we're on this earth.

The Apostle Paul writes:

[Because he's our king] We make it our goal to please him ... for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of

us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

II Corinthians 5:9-10 (NIV)

That's not quite as nice and safe as the Jesus who shows up just to make us feel comfortable or to fix everything for us, right? But this is the King. And it makes sense that the King is going to reward or judge his servants for how well we do what He's told us to do.

Friends, what I'm trying to say here is, Easter isn't just about a dying savior. It's about a Resurrected King who is busting loose, who is calling people to love and serve Him, and is coming back one day to rule. And that's why Christianity isn't "just believing" a bunch of facts about Jesus. It's about that belief producing fruit, first in our hearts and in our character, and then in our lives. And that's

how we know our faith is real.

Specific Assignments

Now, if that's the Jesus of Easter ... if he's a king with an assignment that his followers, his children, his subjects live in such a way that other people are drawn to Him ... let's talk very briefly about how we might carry that assignment out in everyday life without becoming obnoxious or preachy. Because, a lot of times people have read that passage, where Jesus said "go do this..." and they become very in your face, very obnoxious, very "my way or the highway", and it becomes a personal agenda. That's not what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is saying you go out and live in such a way that people are drawn to you, and then when they ask why, you explain it's because "I belong to this king and this kingdom, and he's changing my life and this is what I do.

Now, I think there are four things that any of us could do this week that would exhibit for other people, who don't belong to the king, what it's like to be part of the Kingdom of God. I think, these things are unique characteristics of Kingdom living. In fact, I want to suggest that we make it a personal goal of everyone here today to pick two of these and say, "this week, I'm going to try to do these two things." And maybe as I go through this list, God will tell you "yeah, those are the two for you."

First thing we could do that would demonstrate life in God's Kingdom is to ...

1. Forgive someone.

... because people don't naturally forgive in this world, right? What happens when somebody hurts us or offends us, what do we do? We strike back or we want to get even or

get revenge. The last thing, the most unnatural thing is, when someone does something to hurt us is to forgive them. And I'm not talking about forgiving like "I'm just going to ignore you because you're too difficult to deal with." I'm talking about this is a person who has come into your life and has hurt you, they have intentionally done wrong to you. And you look at them in the face and you say "because of what Jesus did for me, I will do it for you. Forgiven people have the power to forgive, so, that's what I'm going to do for you." And you just make the decision that "I'm going to release you of what you owe to me. You don't have to make amends to me because that's what Jesus did for me."

I think that's one way that you can do that this week. So maybe you know some people that you need to forgive. Something will happen this week and you will need to

forgive.

I think another thing we could do that would demonstrate life in God's Kingdom is to ...

2. Find someone to help

And I'm not talking about a family member or the neighbor who it's obvious you should help. I'm talking about someone who the rest of the world would say, "you have no responsibility whatsoever to help this person." Nobody does that kind of thing. This is a unique characteristic to the Kingdom of God. Why? Because this is what Jesus did for us. Paul says in Romans Chapter 5, that while we were still sinners, while we were undeserving of any help whatsoever from God, Christ forgave us. So were just going to take what we've received and give it back to other people. So find someone to help this week.

I think a third thing we could do that would demonstrate life in God's Kingdom to someone else is to ...

3. Serve someone who is supposed to serve you.

And that's just a little bit different than helping someone, because, this is the idea that in our world there is kind of a pecking order - if you're a boss, if you're a parent, if you're a coach, or a leader - there is kind of this chain of command thing. And the way it works in the world is, you serve the people who are above you, who are at the top of the chain of command. But in the kingdom, that's not how it works.

John 13 tells us that on the night before Jesus was betrayed, they had the passover meal, which they enjoyed together, and then went

into this upper room (they had been out on the streets all day, walking around in sandals and they've got dust all over their feet) and they go into the room and the custom is that there is a servant there who has a basin of water and a towel, and he will wash people's feet as they come in. But when they get there, there is no servant. So the guys are looking around going, "well, gee, what are we going to do about our dirty feet?" And the bible says that Jesus took the basin and the towel himself and he got down and began to wash their feet, and they were freaking out, "wait a minute, you are up here, and we're down here, why are you ...?" And Peter just got so crazy - "I'm not going to let you do this. Don't even touch my feet! This is how it is supposed to be." And Jesus said, "Look, you're right, that is how it is supposed to be. But I am your Lord and your Master, and I am serving you, so you do the same thing for others."

You serve the people who should serve you, and that's a way of demonstrating what life is like in the Kingdom. You could do that sometime this week.

Finally, one more thing we could do that would demonstrate what life is like in God's Kingdom is to ...

4. Reach out to someone most religious people would write off.

All of us have people in our orbit and we go, "that's the last person that would ever be interested in going to North Heartland Community Church to a service with me. That's the last person who would ever be interested in knowing anything about Jesus." But those were the people that Jesus had in his sights. In fact, Jesus got into trouble all the time because he hung out with those people. The Pharisees said, "those aren't

religious people, what are you doing with them?" And Jesus said, "I have come to seek and save the lost." And he's inviting us to do the same thing. So, this week maybe that's a way you could do that.

Conclusion

Now, as I went through that list, some of you knew right then which ones you're going to do this week. But if you didn't, I want to just pray that God would show you what it means to serve Him as the living King as a loyal subject; as a part of his family. I'll pray that he will show you how to do that this week.

In fact, let's do that together right now (as our band comes to close our service):

God, I thank you for the truth of your Word. I thank you that you don't leave us in the dark. And Jesus, I thank you

that you came to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You didn't come to be cute, nice, co-dependent or the Spirit-in-the-Sky ticket into Heaven. And it's the resurrection that shows you are the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God, I pray that in the next week you will help us to see ways to respond to you concerning your agenda and help us to be loyal subjects to you this week.

Now, before I finish praying, I want to say something to people who have been here for maybe a couple of months now, you're checking things out, and this church thing, this Jesus thing is all kind of new to you. In your mind you're still kind of thinking it through and you're kind of willing to make Jesus your consultant about your life, but you're not really ready to say "you are my king and I want to be a loyal subject to you."

I just want to say to you, I can't think of a better time than this Easter season, right now, to make that switch, make that decision to step over the line and give him control of your life. Jesus' offer and promise to you is amazing: He will forgive you, he will adopt you, he will transform you from the inside out, but the one condition is that he has to have control of your life.

If you've never given control of your life to Jesus, this morning I want to invite you to pray with me: "Dear King Jesus, would you please forgive me, adopt me and change me? Here is the steering wheel of my life. Here is the control stick of my life. And from this day forward, You run the show, and I will be your subject. Amen."

This morning, if you prayed that prayer, I want to invite you as you leave, to take one of the cards in the seat backs, and just write

your name down there and say I prayed this morning to give Jesus control of my life. And you can hand it to one of the ushers on the way out.

Endnotes

ⁱ This message is highly dependent on Larry's message "When Did Jesus Become Cute, Nice, Gullible and Tame?" from Easter 2007