

Verbal Announcements:

Missions Prayer: Join us for an informative session to learn more about two life-changing opportunities. Calvary Murrieta has two Cross Cultural trips coming up this year, Kosovo in June and Nepal in November. We have an informational meeting on Sunday March 24th at 3:00PM.

Crosswalk: March 29th, Good Friday - We will be gathering in the parking lot of **Reliance Church** near Old Town Temecula and walk .9 miles to Sam Hicks Park! The destination is the same as always, but we are gathering in a different place to start the Walk! Gather at **11:00 AM, Begin walking at 11:15 AM, Walk to Sam Hick's Park** in Old Town Temecula and enjoy praise and worship time! There will be a shuttle bus back to the church parking lot for those who don't want to walk back!

Intro

Ever notice how the British royalty has so much attention? The royals can be quite fascinating to some. And to others, confusing. Even the fact the British still have a monarchy when there are a democracy is weird. We Americans don't get it. Why use all those tax dollars and give all those privileges to a family that is already wealthy, just to keep the title? Aren't all monarchies automatically bad? What good are kings anyways?

Any of you can name some famous kings, whether good or bad?

Did you guys know there was a king who was only 12 inches tall? He was a terrible king, but made a great ruler.

But seriously, monarchies are more and more rare in our world today, so when we read about Jesus being King, we struggle with it. And if you think about it, the use of the word king or reign is used less in our culture, even in churches. Jesus described as a friend, counselor, savior, healer, or shepherd are all probably more common. It's what we're familiar with. And He is all those things, but king is also what He is. And why is that important? Because the position and title of king means authority. And both in Jesus' day and our day today, that is controversial. In our culture today, we want everyone to be king, to be their own boss, to have authority. Yet, when there isn't a structure of authority, when there is a lack of legitimate rule, there is chaos. Just look at the horrible things going on in Haiti right now, or West Africa. And unlike questionable elections or military juntas, Jesus claims authority because he has the power and wisdom as Creator. And that kingship in a way is what makes Jesus so divisive.

Rumors and whispers of Jesus being King is what caused him some of his most tense moments in life. He was almost killed as a baby by King Herod because of the magi coming to worship a new king. He avoided crowds who tried to make him king during his ministry when it wasn't time. Other people would interrogate him if he was the Christ, the promised king to come, and he would speak in parables about his kingdom being unlike any other. Palm Sunday is coming up and that day marks when Jesus was celebrated as a king coming into Jerusalem. And one of the charges the Jews brought before Pilate was that Jesus claimed to be king and Pilate even asks him "Are you a King" Finally, on the sign above Jesus on the cross was written "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". Jesus being king was the most intriguing and threatening thing about him in many ways.

Jesus knew this and is why he told different parables about people rejecting kings and their sons. A couple of them were told right before he died. We'll focus on one of them tonight, in Matthew 22:1-14. So, please turn there in your bibles or phone as I share the context of this story.

According to Matthew, Jesus has entered Jerusalem on the donkey to shouts of Hosanna and then cleared out the temple of all the money changers and stalls. He's acting as if He has authority, but what does that mean? People have questions and Pharisees want answers.

Let's Pray

Matthew 22: 1-14

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, ² "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.'" ⁵ But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. ¹² And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and

cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

The Guests

A wedding in Jesus' day was a huge event for the whole community. And if it was the King's son, it would be the party of the century. All the best food, drinks, and music would be provided. This isn't something last minute, everyone knew this day was coming and if you were on the list, it was an honor and something you would have planned around. So to Jesus' audience, it is unbelievable that so many would have dishonored the king and refused to come. Now the king is more than gracious, he sends his messengers a second time, giving these guests another chance, telling them about the good food that was ready. But still they refuse. Notice the reasons, some were involved with business, others their property, and others were just cruel and violent. But the phrase "they paid no attention" jumped out at me. Throughout history, people have ignored God and His Son. The Jews rebelled in the desert despite walking through the Red Sea and seeing God's amazing deliverance. The people turned to idols even after amazing victories to gain the promised land under Joshua. And in Jesus' day people saw his amazing miracles and heard his teachings, but many turned from him and shouted "Crucify". Today, millions are indifferent to Jesus and faith in general. Why is that?

A big part of this is that people don't want to allow Jesus to be King of their life. They don't want to pledge loyalty to Him, to submit to Him. His rule threatens, scares, intimidates. Not because He is mean or cruel, but because in their selfishness they don't believe what He has for them is worth it. That's the original sin. Adam and Eve had millions of trees to eat from, a perfect garden to enjoy. But they fell to lie that God was holding out on them, that there was more outside His limits. Isn't that why we all give into temptation? Why we fail to follow God? We think there's something better outside of Him, that we'll miss out. We need to work and not sabbath, we need to get drunk or get high because that's where real peace and joy is found, not in Him. We have to have sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman because that's the ultimate pleasure and we don't think God can satisfy. We have to hold on to that grudge and get revenge because God's justice isn't enough. God doesn't care about my longings or satisfaction.

Yet here we see a King that just wants to bless His people, who wants them to come enjoy a feast with Him. Jesus' first miracle was at a wedding, He was accused of being at parties too much. Jesus promised that He was living water that could truly satisfy. Jesus desires to fulfill us. My family has been reading C.S. Lewis' classic "The Screwtape Letters" for Lent and the other day we read how God is described as hedonistic, which is meant for shock of course. But in some ways, it's true, God created us to experience Joy, to have our deepest

longings fulfilled, to have unbelievable pleasure, which is all found in His presence. He is hedonistic.

And yet so many fail to believe that. The guests' rejection of an invitation to share in the feast is what causes their destruction. It sounds so pitiful when it's put that way. It's similar to the older son in Jesus' parable about the father with 2 sons. The older son refuses to go in and celebrate when his younger brother returned home, sulking outside. In the end, no one is more foolish and responsible for their own misery and destruction than someone who refuses good things that are good for them just out of spite or selfishness or a desire for control. That is the picture of stubbornness, of being obstinate and refusing to let Christ rule as King.

The Servants

However, there are those who serve the King, who follow Jesus' rule. In this parable their main job is to recruit the guests. They go and are rejected. Yet they show their loyalty and devotion by going again to face rejection and even death. But the King's Son is worth it. Honoring the Son is honoring the King, and Honoring the King honors the Son. You can't separate them. And so these servants go, giving guests another chance so that none are without excuse. They willingly suffer for their King.

And after the failure of so many to accept this invitation, what do the servants get to do? Fill the party with all kinds of people from all kinds of places. I love the phrase "the bad and the good". It was never about being worthy, but about accepting the invitation to the king's banquet. So in heaven, we will see all kinds of people, many who probably were seen as "too lost", "beyond hope", "dirty", "unclean", "no way". But the King has invited them; they have the golden ticket. It's His grace and generosity that gets them in.

The last couple of weeks our time here on Wednesday has been about how Calvary Murrieta is seeking two specific unreached people groups. The King wants them at the banquet too. The party is to be filled with every tribe and tongue and nation.

When you think of it that way, inviting someone to a party, then evangelism and missions isn't so scary. That's what we're doing, inviting people to the greatest event ever, one that will never end and never get boring or awkward. There are no diminishing returns in heaven. This is the best thing anyone will ever be a part of, ever! Yet do we act like it? Do we really live that way? The servants in this story did. That's the major sign that Jesus is your King, that you want to celebrate Him and see everyone else see how great He is.

The Son

In this story the goal is to have the biggest party to celebrate the son. A wedding has always meant to be a celebration of love, and not just the romantic emotions, but the deeper love, the commitment between people and the generosity of families making it happen. In America we've largely forgotten this part of marriage. I recently was at a wedding between two people from West Africa. In their culture, honor is shown to not just the bride and groom, in fact they are less of the focus. There was lots of thanks and honor shown to family relatives, to guests, and to religious mentors and leaders. It was refreshing to see when so many weddings seem to produce "Bridezillas" and reek of entitlement. Love is always meant to be shared and multiplied. That is why in the parable the guests rejecting the invitation is so wrong. And why the King insists on inviting others. Celebrating love and giving go hand in hand. It's part of the culture of God's Kingdom.

Jesus is to be celebrated, to be honored. And Jesus is deserving of Honor because He is the Son. He is King, it's his birthright. He is the only one who can sit on the throne of heaven, administer justice, defend His people, to bring forth peace. That was always the appeal of a monarchy, it had a clear vision of rule being part of one's destiny, something one was born to do.

There's two parts of Jesus being King. Jesus has been King before time began, as God the creator He has all the power and dominion over creation. Creation longs for the return of its King, which will happen at the end times. All will bow, whether joyfully or reluctantly. That position is secure and cannot be changed. But Jesus also wants to rule each and every person's life, to reign in their heart. Not to be a cruel tyrant, but to give each person purpose and belonging, to be citizens of heaven. That's what Paul is saying in Colossians 3 when he implores people to "let Christ rule in your hearts".

Recently my sons and I did a movie marathon with all the Lord of the Rings and the Hobbit movies. J.R.R. Tolkien, like a good British intellectual, had a deep appreciation for royalty. As a Christian, he also believed in rule of Christ. If you think about it, the lonely mountain in the Hobbit could be a metaphor for the world and your heart. An evil dragon rules in that mountain, wrongly seizing control. But the rightful king is on a mission to slay the dragon and rule justly on the throne. And all the people and the land will flourish under that rule. That is our world, and our hearts. It longs for its true King.

This image of the world and its people being blessed and rejoicing in the one true King is powerfully shown in Psalm 97

The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!

² Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

³ Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries all around.

⁴ His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees and trembles.

⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.

⁶ The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.

⁷ All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; worship him, all you gods!

⁸ Zion hears and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments, O LORD.

⁹ For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰ O you who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

¹¹ Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.

¹² Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

The opportunity is there, but it's on each of us on how we'll respond. Jesus was killed for the crime of being the king. That was really his choice, he gave up being royal as was treated as guilty so that all of us who were guilty could become royal. Back then and today, people reject his rule by paying no attention to Him and attacking His servants. But there are others who go out, facing danger while rejoicing in Him and looking forward to celebrating with Him.

Is Jesus' rule criminal or central to your life?"

Let's Pray