

Matthew 11:25-30 – Pentecost 6 – Your King is Coming – July 5, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

This year we celebrate a significant anniversary. A document about human government was published that changed the whole course of history. In 1526—exactly five hundred years ago—Martin Luther published a short treatise entitled, *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved*. I am sure this is the one you were thinking about too.

One of our breakout sessions at Higher Things this week dealt with this text. Here Luther speaks to soldiers, the military, and the government. Luther emphasizes a middle way between the mingling of the two realms—Church and state—found in the Roman Church—and the total abandonment of the state found among the more radical reformers.

For Luther, soldiers have a true Christian vocation in which they can love and serve their neighbors by living with discipline and defending their country. But here, Luther says even more. He talks about right government and just war. He expects kings and presidents to lead their nations in peace. God has not instituted worldly government to conquer, but to maintain peace and to avoid war when at all possible.

Remember, God rules the nations through the authority that he gives. Rulers are God's ministers in the left-hand kingdom. All the affairs of state are subject to Him. Every ruler is subject to the King of heaven—whether he recognizes it or not. We talked about this in June at one of our Wednesday services as we looked at 1 Timothy 2. That sermon is available on the Church website if you missed it. And I won't repeat all of the details today.

But it is as the second Psalm suggests. "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill...Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

And thus, we are to pray for kings and presidents—so that they follow God's direction—so that the church may flourish—and so that we can lead quiet, peaceful lives—as Paul directs.

We will do just that today. And this is good citizenship for us in the world as Christians. The nation needs a vibrant Church. We pray for the good of this country. We seek the welfare of the nation in which God has placed us. The Church is a light to this nation—and all the nations.

And we are to respect governmental authority—in so far as the Christian faith allows. Of course, we must always obey God over that authority. We are citizens of the kingdom of heaven first. But we are to be good citizens in both kingdoms—in the country and in the Church.

It is as Peter says in 1 Peter 2, "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor."

Now, from the beginning, America has had a tough relationship with kings. We still do. Freedom is often just a desire to be free from any authority. We want to do what

we want to do. In 1776, it was King George III. The nation sought independence from his rule—and his taxes, of course. And this desire for independence was often couched in language that expressed opposition to monarchy as a form of government—and sometimes even a higher loyalty to God.

Thomas Paine, American founding father, political philosopher, and Deist, interestingly enough, once said, “In America, the rule of law is king. But where, says some, is the king of America? I’ll tell you friend, He reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the royal brute of Britain.”

Now, we know American history. And there are certainly things to celebrate this weekend. We can be grateful for this nation. Although I am ready for the at-home fireworks season to be over. You all do make some noise.

But today—more importantly—I invite you to come under the Kingship of Christ. Come under His rule and reign. Find your identity in the kingdom of heaven. It is a good place to be. He is a Benevolent Monarch. You can hear this reflected in our Old Testament reading today—one we often hear in Advent and on Palm Sunday. “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

And you can hear the Church’s confession of Christ as King reflected in our hymns today. Christ is the Beautiful Savior. He is the King of Creation. He is glorious above. And unlike the heavy weight of taxes or tyranny that King George, President Biden, or President Trump—may place on us—Christ tells us His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

In our reading, He says some of the most comforting words that you will ever hear from Jesus. And they are just so true. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Now remember that just last week we heard Jesus say that we must take up our crosses and follow Him. Discipleship means that we die to ourselves. We give up our childish and selfish ways. We give up those sins that so easily entangle us. We give up our independence and autonomy—our self-rule. We live for Christ, who gave Himself for us.

I like the way Paul says it in Galatians 2, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

This life looks like the Sermon on the Mount—in this same Gospel. We follow in the footsteps of Jesus. It is willfully giving ourselves over to the sovereignty of God. It is to acknowledge His Kingship over our lives and over all creation—including this country.

And we who follow Jesus’ commandments entirely—as we let Jesus’ yoke rest on us—without resistance—we find the burden light. And in the gentle pressure of this

yoke, we receive the strength to walk the right path—to follow Jesus—without becoming weary.

Now, there is a surprising tension in Jesus' words. He invites us to own Him as King. He invites us to take Him seriously. But this is a gracious invitation. It is for our good. But it is not universally received—as you may have noticed.

And when we look at the context of our reading—earlier in this same chapter—we find Jesus confronting the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and even Jesus' current hometown—Capernaum—for their stubborn resistance. They refused to acknowledge their King—even as He stood in their midst. They refused to acknowledge the blessing of God in Jesus Christ as He performed miracles among them.

Here, Jesus says, “For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

And with these words, we hear the tension that the presence of King Jesus brings. These are serious words. They have been privileged to witness His ministry—His teachings and miracles. But they have rejected Him. They prefer their own self-righteousness, smugness, and hardness of heart. And the sum of the matter is this. We should take Jesus—and the kingdom of God seriously. When we do, we escape judgment. When we do not, we invite it.

I like the way Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it. “Jesus commandment is harsh, inhumanly harsh for someone who resists it. Jesus' commandment is gentle and not difficult for someone who willingly accepts it. His commandments are not burdensome.”

Bonhoeffer speaks to a willingness of heart. Jesus' hearers—following the practices of the self-righteous leaders—have only become weary and increasingly burdened. Maybe we are in the same place—under the rule and reign of our own sinful nature—or endless entertainment—or even just what everyone else demands of us.

But Jesus invites us to true rest. Our weariness and burdens can only be released by the yoke of the discipleship of Jesus.

It is a little ironic. We find the ultimate rest in the easy yoke and light burden of following Jesus—obeying Jesus—trusting Jesus. There is something counterintuitive in finding rest in a way of discipleship that is so highly demanding. But here it is.

Jesus demands the highest commitment imaginable. Seeking the kingdom of heaven is placed before treasure, or country, or personal comfort. Even so, this yoke is what Jesus offers to us. It transforms us—even as it offers peace. And it is the greatest privilege imaginable.

Jesus offers us true life—one that forms us from the inside out. It is a life that makes us into the kinds of people who love and serve Christ—with a joyful spirit and a fervent hope—from a renewed nature under the easy yoke of discipleship. And as we live under the yoke of Christ, we see that there is just absolutely no other way to live. Christ is King. And that is very good news.

So, it is okay to celebrate this weekend. Especially with quiet fireworks rather than loud ones. We can appreciate the blessings that this nation has been afforded by God. And it is okay to value freedom—rightly defined, of course. The Puritan Thomas

Watson said it this way, “To serve God, to love God, to enjoy God is the sweetest freedom in the world.”

And such is the freedom that comes with having Jesus as our King. Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He. He is our Benevolent Monarch. And we live under His rule and reign. We live in the kingdom of God—a present reality—as we await the day when His kingdom comes fully—with power and great glory.

But until that day, He says to you, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+