

Christ the King Sunday

Longing to Belong

John 18:33-37

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Analysis by Glenn L. Monson

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters[a] again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” 35 Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” 36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” 37 Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that 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.”



DIAGNOSIS: We So Much Want to Belong

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): All That Matters Is Belonging

Belonging is very important to us. We want to make the team, to be accepted with the “cool kids,” to belong to the honor society. Our world includes and excludes, announces who belongs and who does not, and we are left to figure out how we shall speak, dress, appear, and position ourselves so that the ever-elusive goal of belonging will be ours. The kingdom to which we are longing to belong is wholly of this world.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): The Price of Belonging

Because we are desperate to belong to this worldly kingdom, we find that certain requirements come our way: the rules of culture and society become our rules, even when they are in conflict with God’s law. Since we have announced that we are subjects in this kingdom we are beholden to the powers that

reign in this realm. We give ourselves to the ways of this kingdom with all its greed, violence, and corruption.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Death Is Our King

Because we belong to this world, we are estranged from God. “You can only have one Master; for if you love the one, you will hate the other,” says our Lord. The one we belong to has turned out to be one who does not lead us to life, but to death. Sin has claimed us, “For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate... I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want... that I do.” The wages of sin is death. We belong to sin. Finally Death is our king.

PROGNOSIS: God Claims Us

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Christ Defeats Death and Claims Us as His Own



“For God loved us so much, that while we were yet sinners—while we yet belonged to sin—Christ died for us.” Jesus says, “You belong to me. You belong to the Truth. You belong to the Father and no one shall snatch you out of the Father’s hand; I and the Father are one.” In our baptism Christ claims us as his own. Through the Cross and Resurrection sin’s power is broken. Sin, death and the devil, who previously laid claim to us, are exposed as impotent. There is one king; it is Christ. We belong to him.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Beholden to This World No Longer

We do not belong to this world. We belong to Christ’s kingdom, where truth reigns. Because we are subject only to Christ, we live freely, servants of one another. We no longer are beholden to the rulers of this world; they have no power over us. Pilate and those like him hold no appeal to us. Our chains are broken. We are no longer afraid of not belonging to this world.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): All Belong to Christ

We testify to the truth: “We belong to Christ!” With our whole lives we proclaim the truth of Christ’s victory over sin and death. We announce this truth to others. We announce that they too no longer belong to the world—Christ’s victory is for all. We live freely as servants of one another.