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Behold Your King!

John 19.6-15

Series: Signs of Life

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I. **Kingdom Aliens**

- A. Slogans of the American Revolution
 - 1. “Give me liberty or give me death” (Patrick Henry)
 - 2. “No Taxation without Representation”
 - 3. “Liberty or Death – Don’t Tread on Me” (The Culpeper Minute Men)
 - 4. “Never Trust a Redcoat” (Paul Revere)
 - 5. “Join or Die” (Benjamin Franklin)
 - 6. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” (Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, allusion to words of John Locke)
- B. John Guest’s Discovery
 - 1. **“We serve no Sovereign Here!”**
 - a. The colonists were rejecting the rule of King George III
 - b. Whose policies sought to exact financial gain for the home country
 - c. At the expense of a people who had no say in their execution
 - 2. But not only did the colonists reject the taxation policies
 - a. They rejected the very right of the King to reign over the colonies
- C. Reminder: We are aliens to living under the authority of a king
 - 1. In the revolutionary war days, that was the norm
 - a. No matter the country, there was always a king, emperor, czar, whatever
 - 2. Significance of the revolution
 - a. “Humanity has won its battle. Liberty now has a country” (Marquis De Lafayette)
 - 3. As old as we are – none of us were around for the American Revolution
 - a. The notion of living under a king is as foreign to us as eating kimchi for breakfast
 - b. We have no idea what it’s like to be subservient to a monarch
 - 4. There are still monarchies around
 - a. Great Britain (currently Queen Elizabeth II) – but the monarchy has very little real power, primarily ceremonial in its role, and only influences by virtue of her moral persuasion
 - b. Queen is shared by 14 other independent countries in the Commonwealth of Nations – including Canada
 - c. But even in those cases, the Monarch wields little real power

5. Not so for the world of the Bible
 - a. Where kings were pervasive
- D. But for those of us who were born in these United States, “we serve no sovereign here”
 1. We do not know what it’s like to live under the oppression of whims of a despot
 2. That’s despite the contemporary political rhetoric which almost always characterizes the other political party of some form of tyrannic despotism
 - a. But no matter how reprehensible our leaders might be, we have checks and balances
 - b. There is a limit to what the President can do
 - c. Congress holds the purse strings
 - d. Congress makes laws
 - e. Supreme Court interprets the laws
 - f. And even the most active executive-ordering president (and we’ve had several recently) are subject to barriers and controls
- E. But the world of the Bible is the world of Kings
 1. So our experience with a democratic republic makes it very difficult to be a Christian
 - a. Because, bottom line – God is the King
 - b. And God’s reigns and rules over a Kingdom
 2. But we have so little human reference for such a kingdom
 - a. And when we do experience a kingdom-like government, it’s usually nothing like the true Kingdom of God
- F. Out text this morning reminds us of kingdom principles
 1. And ultimately, the person and work of Jesus establishes the Kingdom
 - a. And establishes Jesus as the King
- G. Text – John 19
 1. Been through the two trials of Jesus
 - a. Jewish and Roman
 - b. Jewish – guilty of blasphemy
 - c. Roman – not guilty before Pilate of treason
 - d. Led to a contention between Jewish leaders and Pilate
 - e. Jews wanted Jesus executed
 2. **John 19:6–15** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!”
 - b. Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.”
 - c. 7 The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.”
 - d. 8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.
 - e. 9 He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?”
 - f. But Jesus gave him no answer.

- g. 10 So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?”
- h. 11 Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”
- i. 12 From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”
- j. 13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha.
- k. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”
- l. 15 They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!”
- m. Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?”
- n. The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

II. **The Fears of Pilate**

- A. The first thing we notice about this text is that Pontius Pilate is afraid
 - 1. In spite of his pervasive authority to govern the Roman province of Palestine with whatever struck his fancy – Pilate is afraid
 - 2. I wonder – is that not true of every despot
 - a. Every ruler seems to be afraid of something or someone
 - b. And so much of what a ruler does is driven by fear
 - 3. Take Russia, for instance
 - a. Just last week the daughter of one of Vladimir Putin’s Russian nationalist ideological leaders
 - b. Was murdered – by a car bomb
 - c. Some thought intended for her father
 - d. But the woman herself was a public figure, a staunch defender of Putin’s vision of a new Russia
 - e. You would think that would make Putin just a little bit nervous!
 - f. And how that might affect his engagement with who he thought were his supporters
 - 4. Leaders operate more by fear than we think
 - a. Pilate is no different
 - b. So of what, or whom, was Pilate afraid?
- B. **The People**
 - 1. Pilate had concluded that Jesus was guilty of no crime worth the death penalty
 - a. But he was afraid enough of the Jewish leaders, and the Jewish people for that matter, that he tried to make a mockery of Jesus
 - b. He had him beaten, then dressed him up in a purple robe and a crown of thorns, and paraded Him before the crowd

- c. And exclaimed “Behold, the Man!”
 - d. He had hoped to evoke some sympathy for this pathetic image of a human being
 - e. So that they would conclude enough was enough, and that the punishment was sufficient
2. But to Pilate’s great consternation, when he brought Jesus out,
 - a. **John 19:6** (ESV) — 6 When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” ...
 - b. These people were impossible!
 - c. Now, what was Pilate going to do?
 3. **John 19:6** (ESV) — 6 ... Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.”
 - a. Pilate tries one more time to reason with a mob
 - b. They say, “The thing we learn from history is that we never learn anything from history”
 - c. We still don’t understand that you can’t reason with a mob
 - d. We see it in our cities; we see it still on our college campuses
 - e. Yet we still see politicians and administrators try to reason with mobs
 - f. It’s about as effective as trying to rationalize with a two year old
 4. So once again, it doesn’t work
 - a. And Pilate is still stuck between a rock and a hard place
 - b. He’s afraid of losing control in the face of the Jewish mob
 - c. While he has force behind him, sheer numbers are with the Jews
 - d. And he’s afraid of the mob
- C. **The Christ**
1. Then we learn, much to our surprise, that Pilate is also afraid of Jesus
 2. **John 19:7–8** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.”
 - b. 8 When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.
 3. “Son of God!”
 - a. Whoa! Maybe Pilate hadn’t fully grasped the significance of this person, what He claimed to be, and who He actually was
 4. **John 19:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” ...
 5. “Who are You, really?”
 - a. “What’s this business about being the ‘Son of God’?”
 6. Maybe he was getting confused – that this Jesus was somehow more than a mere man
 - a. Perhaps like the half-human, half-divine gods of the Greco-Roman world
 7. Is this Jesus in a category like that?
 - a. Or perhaps another category of being altogether?

8. So back to the drawing board he went
 - a. Taking Jesus back into his private headquarters
 - b. Another run at interrogation seemed to be in order
- D. **The Emperor**
1. That's who he has real reason to be afraid of
 2. He's been sent by Tiberius to administer this backwater province of the Roman Empire
 - a. Considered by many to be the armpit of the Empire
 3. And if he screws this up
 - a. If he allows an insurrection
 - b. If he loses control of these pesky Jews
 - c. He wouldn't just lose his job and pick up another cushy retirement position working with a political think-tank, or find an endowed chair at an ivy-league university like so many of our former governmental officials do
 - d. No! He screws this up – he's toast!
 - e. It's the Roman version of the Gulag Archipelago for him – or worse
 4. He'd already had a tenuous relationship with the Jews in Israel
 - a. And the emperor was keeping a close eye on him
 - b. Pilate would have a short leash
 5. If the Jewish leaders could communicate to Rome that Pilate refused to deal with a Jew who was guilty of treason
 - a. And who was seeking to overthrow the Roman occupation
 - b. Pilate knew that he would be in big trouble
 6. This became apparent as the episode continues to unfold
 - a. **John 19:12** (ESV) — 12 From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."
 - b. The Jews sense his fear – and go after him at just this point
- E. So Pilate's fears drove his decision making
1. He feared the Jewish mob
 2. He feared the possibility that Jesus was more than he appeared
 3. He feared Caesar
 4. So his fears led to his lack of courage
 - a. And to his decision to succumb to the execution
- F. If he only feared God – and not mere human threats
1. He might have done the right thing
 - a. And history might have viewed him differently
 2. He knew the right thing
 - a. And failed to do it
 3. Because he was afraid
- G. What are you afraid of?
1. Seriously

- a. I know you're not in the position of power like Pilate was
- b. But you're still in the position – most of you anyway – of making decisions
- c. Decisions about your welfare
- d. Or about the welfare of loved ones
- 2. What are you afraid of?
 - a. What people think?
 - b. Of losing control over your domain?
 - c. Of relinquishing your possessions or assets?
 - d. Do your fears drive your decisions?
- 3. Pilate was afraid of man
 - a. Should have been afraid of God

III. **The Authority Contention**

- A. **John 19:9–10** (ESV) —
 - 1. 9 He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?”
 - 2. But Jesus gave him no answer.
 - 3. 10 So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?”
- B. So now, driven by fear, Pilate plays the authority card
 - 1. And authority, for Pilate, translates into mere force
 - a. As Paul said in Romans 13, “... he does not bear the sword in vain.”
 - 2. Governing authorities have power to enforce their will on their constituents
 - a. And Pilate presses that issue on Jesus
 - b. “Why don't You answer me? Don't You know I can have you killed? Why don't you speak in Your own defense?”
- C. **John 19:11** (ESV) —
 - 1. 11 Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”
- D. The word for “authority” in this exchange is important
 - 1. Some translations use the term “power”
 - 2. There were several words in the Greek that could have been employed
 - 3. **Dynamis = power**
 - a. Raw power that comes from authority
 - b. Might makes right kind of power
 - 4. **Kratos = power of rule** that can either be used legitimately or illegitimately
 - a. Power that can either be used appropriately by God, or wickedly by the Devil
 - 5. **Exousia = legitimate authority**
 - a. That's the word Jesus used
 - b. And He places it in context

6. Pilate exercises legitimate authority
 - a. But it's legitimate because it is given to him by God
- E. Human government, and its exercise of power, is legitimate
 1. Because human government is established by God
 2. **Romans 13:1-2** (ESV) —
 - a. 1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.
 - b. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.
 3. So as Christians we need to recognize that very fact
 - a. You don't like who's governing you right now?
 - b. You better not say, "He's not my president"
 - c. Or "She's not my congressperson"
 - d. Because if you do that, you are rejected God
 - e. Because human governing authorities – as flawed as they might be – are instituted by God
 - f. And Pilate is no different
- F. Jesus actually affirms Pilate's authority over Jesus
 1. Either to release Him or crucify Him
 2. Pilate's authority is legitimate – because it comes from God
 - a. That's the good news for Pilate
 3. Even though Pilate makes the wrong judgment and sends Jesus to the cross
 - a. His authority to do so is legitimate
 - b. Because it comes from God
- G. So for Pilate, the good news is, his authority comes from God
 1. But for Pilate the bad news is, his authority comes from God
 2. "You would have no authority at all unless it had been given you from above." (**John 19.11**)
 3. "You can make whatever decision you want. You have the authority to do so."
 4. "But the authority you have comes from above"
 5. "You're worried about My claim to be the Son of God?"
 6. "You have greater things to be worried about"
 7. "You will be held accountable, not by Me, but by Almighty God – the Judge of all the earth"
- H. Does Pilate have authority?
 1. Even over the incarnate Son of God?
 - a. Yes he does!
 2. But he is accountable for the exercise of that authority
- I. And the same thing is true for every governing official
 1. In our nation or in any other nation
 2. We say we are "One nation under God"
 - a. And we debate whether that should be in our pledge of allegiance

3. Whether it's in the pledge of allegiance, or in any other governing document
 - a. Or whether it's posted in courtrooms or in Congress, or wherever
 - b. It can be found nowhere stated
4. But it's still true
 - a. All nations are under God
 - b. And every single ruler, every single king, every single emperor
 - c. Every legislator
 - d. Every judge
 - e. Every sheriff
 - f. Every dog catcher
 - g. Every mosquito control officer
5. Whatever authority they have
 - a. It all comes from God

IV. **The King Conundrum**

A. **John 19:12–15** (ESV) —

1. 12 From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, “If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”
2. 13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha.
3. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”
4. 15 They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

B. This is the most stunning of all exchanges between Pilate and the Jews

1. Was Pilate cynical here as he was when he declared “What is truth?”
 - a. Was he being sarcastic when he exclaimed “Behold you King!”?
2. Or was something in him convinced that Jesus was who He claimed to be
 - a. That He was, perhaps, the Son of God
 - b. But that He was, most certainly, the King of the Jews
3. “Behold your King!”

C. But then the Jews said, “We have no king but Caesar”

1. Really?
2. Jews would say that?
 - a. Jews who had such a rich history of waiting for, longing for, the Messiah?
 - b. The Messiah – the true David’s greater son?
3. Jews who looked at the Roman occupation as a temporary misfortune?
 - a. Jews who knew in their hearts that the reason there was a Roman occupation was because of their rejection of the reign and rule of God?

- D. These are the descendants of those who, in the days of Samuel, clamored for a human king like all the other nations around them
 - 1. Who Samuel recognized as rejecting God as King
 - 2. The descendants of those who relished in the appointment of Saul as king
 - a. Who adored and treasured David as the quintessential king of Israel
 - 3. The descendants of a history of a divided kingdom
 - a. As the prophets prophesied that eventually there would be again one people with one true king
 - 4. And these people would exclaim, “We have no king but Caesar”
- E. What a bunch of blasphemers!
 - 1. Even as they seek the crucifixion of the One whom they accuse of blasphemy
 - 2. What a conundrum!
 - a. What hypocrisy!
 - b. What stupidity!
- F. Sin makes one say and do stupid things
 - 1. “We have no king but Caesar”

V. **Behold Your King!**

- A. So Pilate exclaims, “Behold your King!”
 - 1. The Jews covered their eyes
 - a. They will not behold their King!
- B. Will you behold their King?
 - 1. He’s one and the same
 - 2. He’s the King of kings
- C. He has real authority
 - 1. Which He exercises justly
 - a. Powerfully
 - b. With grace and compassion
- D. He sits on the throne of the universe
 - 1. Does He sit on the throne of your life?
- E. **Psalm 2** (ESV) —
 - 1. 1 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?
 - 2. 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
 - 3. 3 “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”
 - 4. 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.
 - 5. 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,
 - 6. 6 “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”
 - 7. 7 I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.
 - 8. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

9. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
 10. 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.
 11. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
 12. 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.
 13. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.
- F. Every Jew should have known this Psalm by heart
1. And so should you
- G. Behold your King!
1. Will you take refuge in Him?