

*33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters\* 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.'*

There is a story that is told that goes like this: An Amish man was once asked by an enthusiastic young evangelist whether he had been saved and whether he had accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. The gentleman replied, "Why do you ask me such a thing?" I could tell you anything. Here are the names of my banker, my grocer, and my farm hands. Ask them if I've been saved."

Words and reality.

Last week in the confirmation class the students were asked to explain the difference between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ. After a while one group of students settled on the words, "Personal relationship." To know about Christ is just to know some facts but to know Christ is to have a personal relationship with him. To know about Christ is to be able to say that he was born in Bethlehem and that he lived in Galilee and that he healed and taught and prayed. Someone who knows about Christ might even memorize every miracle that Jesus performed and every word he spoke and be able to tell every detail of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection. But knowing all of that about him is not the same as knowing him, not the same as trusting in his love and his forgiveness and his salvation for you.

When I think of Martin Luther is it those two words I think of – for you. It is not simply that the bread is the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ but that that body and blood are given for you. In the catechism Luther teaches, "For the words "for you" simply require a believing heart."

Let's take a look at today's gospel. It takes place after Jesus has been arrested, and is on trial before Pilate, the official who administered the rule of the nation Rome over the people who were in Judah. The gospel reading

before us today is only a portion of that trial. But we begin with Pilate asking Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

That is a simple enough question – one that could be answered with a yes or a no. But in this case either answer would be misleading. Answer yes and Jesus seems like any other political ruler. Answer no and Jesus’ authority is limited.

But Jesus answers a question with a question, “Do you ask this on your own or did others tell you about me?” What Pilate has asked as a general question Jesus is beginning to make personal. Is this your question, Pilate?

“Of course not,” Pilate answers, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?”

Pilate says in effect – this trial has nothing to do with me – it is about you.

But Jesus answers him, “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.”

Jesus was saying that his kingdom, his authority is not given to him by the world, - not dependent on popular opinion or political power or success. His kingdom is not from this world.

“So you are a king?” Pilate asked.

Once more Pilate just wants to know about Jesus. But Jesus wants more.

“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.”

Pilate wants to talk about who Jesus is or what Jesus is. But Jesus wants to make clear the real question is whether Pilate and everyone else will listen to Jesus. Trust in him.

Christ the King we call this day. This is my chance to declare that Sin and Death and all the political powers of this world are not your ruler but the crucified one is your King. And what do I hope for? That you will believe in him.

Not just about him – some facts – but in him – entrusting to him your very life. I hope for you that you will hear his word and follow. Jesus said, “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me.”

Jesus knows you - not just facts about you but you, your very heart. He knows what your banker would say about you, and your grocer and your farm hands.

And he loves you. Knowing all of that – he loves you now and promises he always will.

Will you hear his voice and follow?

