

What do you worship? Sports? Shopping? Money? Things? People? How do you show your worship of these things? Let's look at a few.

If you love sports what do you do? You will go the games, cheer, scream, yell, root on your team. If you passionate about your team you will know the players, know the statistics, you will know the new recruits and those who have retired, the managers and others who are important to the team. You will follow the team throughout the season, talk about the games on Monday with your friends and co-workers; you will buy team paraphernalia, and display it proudly. You will get into arguments with your friends and family about who is the best and why. People will know that you are a giants or an A's fan, part of the Radar Nation or a 49er.

What about shopping? If you love shopping you will know when all the sales are, where to go to get the best stuff, when to buy the goods and if you are truly crazy you were probably out there on Friday after thanksgiving trying to grab up as many deals as you possibly could. If you love shopping, so much that your motto is shopping is retail therapy, if you dream about shopping and what you can get, if you desire the latest and greatest thing, you worship shopping.

What about money? If you love money you will do all that you can to make more; maybe that will mean saving every penny you earn, or maybe it is being obsessive about the stock market, watching it everyday, switching your money around so you can get the best return for your investment. Maybe your whole focus has become about money, so much so that giving is at the bottom of your list. If you passion, your thoughts, your words revolve around money you are worshipping money.

What about food? Maybe you think about food all the time; maybe its when the next meal is coming, or maybe you are always focused on dieting, maybe you are always thinking about how to lose weight or maybe you eat too much. Maybe you are constantly worried about making sure your pantry is full even though you know you have enough. If your body, your image revolve around the food that you eat, you are worshipping food.

What about your families? Are you over extending your children in the hopes that they will be something more than you are? Are you pushing yourself and your family at a million miles in hour in order to keep up with the people next door? Maybe you put on a false image to your friends and extended family to cover up the fact that your family isn't what you desire or long for it to be. Maybe you are so overly concerned about the success of your wife, husband, children that you have forgotten how to sit around the table and just enjoy being in each others company. If you are so obsessed with the appearance of your family, or with the success of your family in comparison to the neighbors next door, you are worshipping your family.

What about Christ? Is Christ the central part of your heart, your life, your worship? Do you look at your life, your family, the money you have, the clothes on your back through the lens of Christ? Do you see that all that we have is truly a gift from God the father? Or

is Christ just another person/thing that you attach to yourself and your identity without a deeper meaning and purpose for your life?

Today is Christ the King Sunday. Christ the King Sunday was instituted by Pope Pius the XI in 1925 as a way of combating the destructive forces of this world. The whole idea behind this Sunday is to remind us once again that the authority by which we are called to order our lives under is Christ himself. While others may try to rule our lives we are called once again to remember that Christ should reign supreme in our hearts and should govern how we live out our faith. On this Sunday we are called to remember that our lives should be focused and devoted to Christ alone who is our Lord and King. What God desires most of us is that we live under Christ's rule and that we worship him alone. IF Christ is Lord of our lives then the rule of Christ should be the standards by which we orient our lives around, Christ should be the supreme example of how we are called to live out our faith.

In all of our examples sports, shopping, money, food, and families when we worship something it fills our thoughts, it can even consume us; we strive to know more, if it is something that we worship and love it becomes engrained within us; people around us know that we are passionate about it (good or bad). If its sports we cheer on the team; our passion can be loud, it is experienced, it is real and others can see that passion within us. If it is something we love, we study it, we know facts about the subject or object. The same should be true of our faith. If Christ is truly the Lord and King of our lives and we are truly worshiping him, then our worship will be evident in our daily lives. We will seek to know all there is to know about the scriptures. We will seek to talk about Christ as if he is in the room with us. We will desire to learn and to grow in our faith. Our faith will be real, experienced, loud and others will see our passion for our faith. IF we love Christ as much as we love sports, money, things, people, etc. we will desire to have that same zeal, that same passion, that same desire to learn and to grow, to know the players, in this case the people of the Bible, the stories that help us in our faith walk.

On Christ the king Sunday we are once again reminded that Christ is to be the Lord over our lives, over everything that we do, say and are. And yet I think this is hard for us to live out. It is far easier for us to justify our love of sports, money, etc. as just things that we enjoy doing or being a part of and it really isn't idol worship because we know our limits and we really aren't making these things gods in our lives are we? And yet do we have the same passion and zeal for Christ as for those material things in our lives? Do we walk away from Sunday morning thinking about our faith the rest of the week, talking about who Christ is in our lives when a friend or co-worker is in need? Do we go out and serve another not because we feel brow-beaten into doing it but because we feel compelled to share out of our wealth with those in need? Do we really worship Christ as much as we should? I think it is hard for us to live under the authority of Christ and allow Christ's rule to govern how we live because we are strong independent people who don't like other people telling us what to do, think, and feel or how to behave. In our independent society the last thing we like to think about is the image of King, a Lord who rules over his servants. Think of a King and a servant relationship. A king is the supreme ruler of a nation, they make the decisions, they govern the people and the people are

supposed to follow. The people in the kingdom don't have a say, or any veto power; they can't control what the king wants to do in his nation they are subjects called to follow his command. And while in one aspect that is the image we have of kings, it isn't the full picture. A king is supposed to provide protection, food, shelter for his servants. In the Old Testament the earthly king was to be a protector, a warrior and most importantly a servant of God himself to the people. He was supposed to look out for the nation of Israel. The King was to be God's representative on earth, and he was to lead the people with dignity, honor and faithfulness while he lived out his own faith in God. The king was an earthly representative of God. When Christ entered the picture, Christ became the earthly representative of God to humanity. He is the supreme ruler, the one whom we are now called to follow; to follow God's rule, a rule of love, of grace, of mercy, of hope, of reconciliation and healing. Christ's rule was a self giving rule. Not that of a dictator or a tyrant. If we see Christ's rule as gracious and merciful, of life giving and not a rule of tyranny we can learn to live under Christ's kingship.

If however we see Christ as a dictator or a tyrant, a boss or a chief executive we will have a hard time living under Christ's rule. For example if you see Christ as a dictator one who tells you what to think, how to act and what to believe without any freedom of will are you graciously going to follow him? Probably not. If Christ is like a boss and you feel like you have to x,y,z in order to get into heaven then sure you might do them, but without passion, enthusiasm or real desire- it will be perfunctory at best. If we live with these negative images attached to the words Christ as King our relationship to Christ and to each other will always be at a distance, for who wants to be in a relationship with a dictator? We have to learn to separate the images of power and rule that we have associated with anyone in leadership from the words Christ is King. Rather we are called to see the image of Christ the King as a loving, intimate, caring relationship between God and his people. Christ who came to rule this world came to lay down his life for each of us. In our scripture passage this morning Paul says that Christ rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of God in whom we have redemption and forgiveness. Christ came not only as a man, but as God's visible representation and manifestation of God- a loving merciful God. Christ is the visible form of an invisible God. Paul says that in Christ all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers all things have been created through Christ and for Christ. Christ himself is before all things and in him all things are held together. He is the head of the body, the church. In other words Christ was there from the very beginning. His kingship, his rule was there when God created the heavens and the earth. Christ has always reigned over everything, including all rulers and powers of this earth. And it was through Christ's earthly life that we now have a relationship with the God who created all things, who created each of us in his own image; a God who did everything in his power to continually bring back the people of Israel into relationship with him; a God who was willing to watch his one and only Son die for all of humanity so that we might have life and have it in abundance. Our passage reminds us that Christ is not a copy or a likeness of God but God on the canvas of our humanity and the embodiment of the divine in the world of men and women. Christ is the one whose rule then we are called to follow for he is the King of Kings. This king did not wear robes or a jeweled crown, he had no servants to wait on him, no soldiers to fight his

battles, he didn't even have a country to rule over, no coins engraved with his face or name. Jesus' kingdom rule was one of grace and mercy, of justice and peace, and we are called to be about the same business. WE are called to be about the business of sharing Christ's love and grace to a broken and hurting world, to not just hear those words but to go out and do. If Christ is head of the church then we as the church are called to look to Christ for all wisdom, guidance, encouragement and strength. We as the church are called to recognize Christ's rule for our individual lives as well as the life of this congregation.

God's plan of salvation and reconciliation is worked out through Christ whose resurrection and exaltation mark the beginning of world history. God's plan of salvation and reconciliation is worked out through the followers of Christ- through each of us individually and through us corporately. We have been given the Gospel message not to hoard to ourselves, but to share with the world around us. Christ is the agent in bringing the universe into harmony with the divine purposes of God, expressed in reconciliation and hope. We then are called to be bearers of that hope. If Christ is King over your life you will seek to do justice, love mercy and to walk humbly with God. If Christ is king then our response should be that of passion, grace, forgiveness and love. Our desire should be to live out our faith with the same enthusiasm and passion we have for sports, money, our families, shopping or what ever it is that we get excited about. We live out our faith not because it earns us a place in heaven but rather as a response to all that God has done for us. Christ laid down his very life for you, he has given each of us immeasurable amounts of grace, he has reconciled us to God and brought us back into relationship with him- the God of the universe, the creator of all living things. Christ has walked the road to hell and back so that we might have life and have it with God for all eternity. Christ has given us an intimate relationship with the creator of the universe. We are forever forgiven and changed because of what Christ has done for us. So our response should be that of joy, passion, gratitude and service because we have been given life and because of all that Christ has done for us. Not out of obligation or because we feel like we are commanded to by a dictator God, but because our lives have been so changed by the message of hope we have in Christ that you have no other choice but to go out and serve like Christ has served us.

To say that Christ is king and then to live as if nothing is changed or different in your life is to say "hmmm, that's nice and do nothing when you have been given a gift of a \$100 million." If Christ is king and ruler of our hearts then we will desire to worship him and serve him only. If Christ is just a figure head, or a dictator or just a boss in the sky then we are missing the greatest gift of an intimate relationship with a loving and gracious God. So the question is, is Christ your king and if he is what are you supposed to do now in light of what Christ has done for you?