

## Day 4 GREATER (AND BETTER) THAN THE WAY OF THE WORLD

MATTHEW 20:20-28; JOHN 13:1-16

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Is Jesus Lord and King? The answer is unmistakable in the New Testament. Yes! A thousand times YES! Now and always. That, however, is not the most important question. The most important question is: What kind of king is King Jesus? Or ask it like this: How does Jesus use his power and authority in and over our lives?

**CONSIDER:** One of the clearest answers in the story of Jesus is found in Matthew 20 and John 13. What kind of leader-ruler is Jesus? What words and images would you use to describe this King?

**REFLECTION:** What do you think about this King Jesus? And even more significant, what will you do about King Jesus? What is the appropriate response to this kind of King?

**PRAYER:** Here is a list of words that describe the best response to Jesus. Use a different word each time as you have a prayerful conversation with Jesus about his role in your life.

Trust	Obey	Listen to
Follow	Serve	Be devoted to
Love	Worship	Surrender

\_\_\_\_\_ (your own word)



## Day 5 GREATER THAN CAESAR (AND OTHER PRETENDERS)

MATTHEW 22:15-22; JOHN 18:28-19:16

It was a VERY dangerous thing to be a rival Lord to Caesar. In that time, the Roman Empire was the great and brutal empire. That empire allowed no rivals to the throne. The Jewish people had been troublesome, but were basically in compliance. The Roman Empire used tax collectors to gather the tribute from the Jews. Some of that money funded the Roman legions stationed in Israel. The Jewish people resented the Roman occupation, the tax collection system, and the authority of the Empire over them. Matthew 22 shows the enemies of Jesus looking to create a no-win situation for Jesus.

The core phrase (often misunderstood) is **“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”** In other words, pay the taxes you owe, but worship, love, and serve the One True God. God is in control, Caesar is not. How do we know? Because within a few hundred years, the Caesar(s) were no more and Jesus was King over a growing movement of millions of followers.

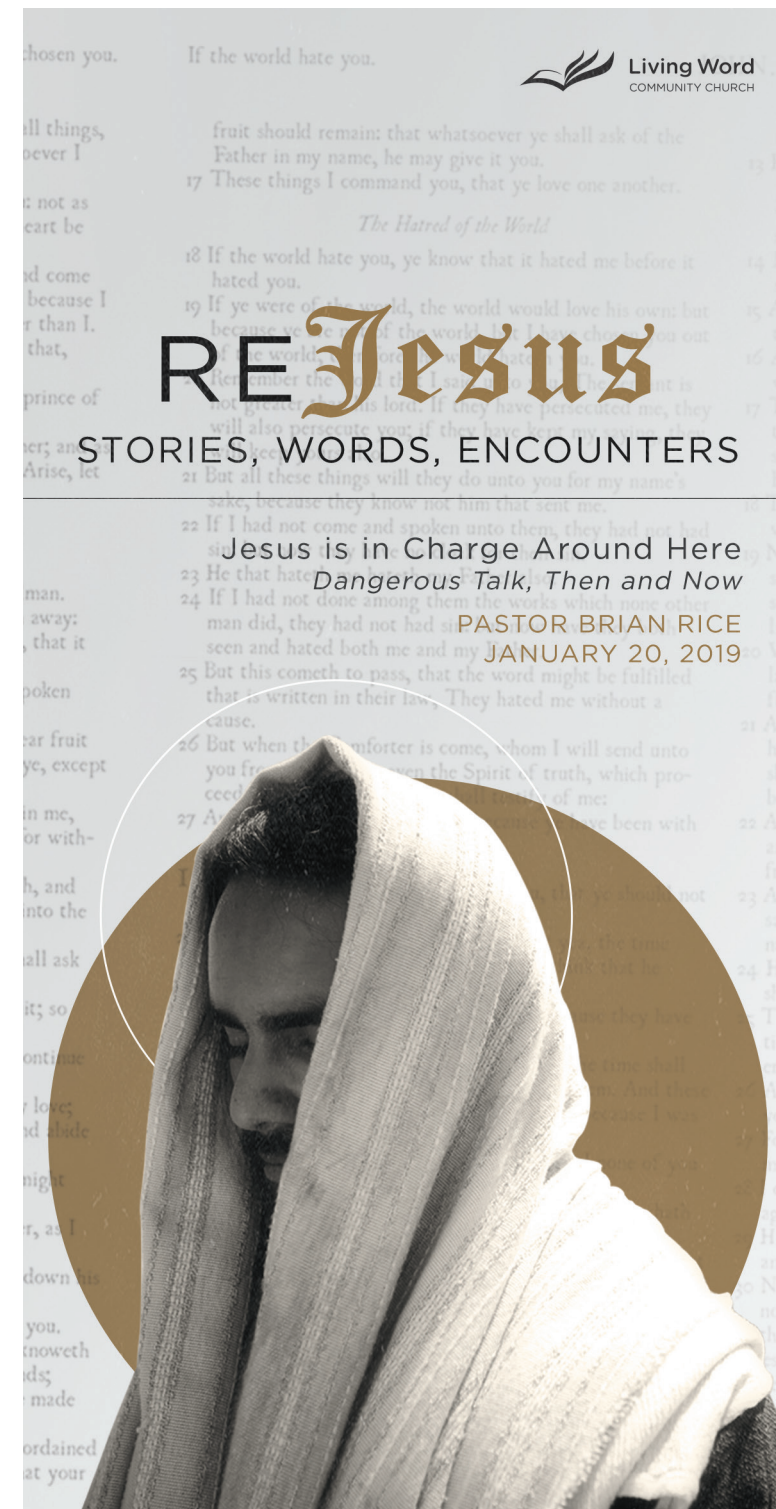
The great irony of John 18 and Pilate is that a foreign ruler recognizes Jesus as King, while the Jewish people claim their only king is Caesar. They (and all of us) should know better. Jesus only and always is the One True and Real King. We need a reJesus reset on this.

For a bonus passage, skim through Acts chapter four and focus on 4:18-31. What do you learn about King Jesus and all the rulers of the world?

Who is your King? Who is your Leader? Who are you following? And what are you giving to your King?

**Talking about someone new being in charge was dangerous talk in Jesus’ day, and it’s dangerous talk still.**

N.T. WRIGHT



## Day 1 KINGS AND KINGDOMS

MARK 1:14-15; MATTHEW 6:33; JOHN 3:1-8; JUDGES 21:25

Words matter. Words matter a great deal. But some of the old words that at one time meant so much are slowly being lost to us. We no longer understand those words, like them, or use them. As we lose words, we lose the meaning they contain. As we lose meaning, we lose touch with the reality that the meaning describes.

Today we have lost, or are losing, the reality of King Jesus. Who uses that language these days? King. Lord. Majesty. Sovereign. Ruler. It sounds archaic, ceremonial, like something that belongs in Downton Abbey in England, but not here. Not now. Not for us. Not in 2019!

So, let's make it contemporary. One book is titled, *Jesus, CEO*. Jesus is in control. Jesus is the Leader. To say Jesus is CEO, Leader, and Lord is to simply say Jesus is in charge around here. That is what it means to be a King. **A King has the power and authority to have his will and way done.** To be in charge. To make decisions. To define direction. To determine the norms for living. And for all such decisions to be acceptable by those who are under the rulership of the King. Because if the decisions, directions, and determinations are not accepted, then Jesus really isn't in charge around here, or at least around you.

You don't want to get into turf wars with Jesus. If you have control issues with Jesus that won't be a good thing. Who is in charge of your life—you or Jesus? Who should be in control of your life—you or Jesus? Who will be in control this week—you or Jesus?

**REFLECTION:** What areas of life (like health, finances, sexuality, marriage, family, work) are currently being contested as to whose will is going to be done? What is preventing you from allowing Jesus to be in charge of those areas of life?

**PRAYER:** Pray the Lord's prayer slowly, thoughtfully, and make it as specific and particular to your situation and life as you need.

**What will it look like for Jesus to be in charge today, as He was in charge then?**

## Day 2 GREATER THAN OUR SINS

LUKE 5:17-26; 7:36-50; JOHN 8:1-11

It will take you a few minutes to read these three stories of forgiveness. As you read them, pay attention to the love of Christ the Savior who forgives sin. But also realize that Jesus is the Lord who has authority and power to forgive sin. That is the outrageous claim and action of Jesus. He has the power and authority to forgive us of our sins.

Sin is another dated word, and not a very popular word, but it is a necessary word. Sin is all that is wrong and evil in us and in the world around us. Sin is both internal, in our heart, and external, in our words and actions. King Jesus is greater than our sin. All of it.

The power of Jesus to forgive sin gets a reaction from everyone. From those whose sins are forgiven the reaction is gratitude. For those who believe only God can forgive sin (they are right, by the way) they are angry with or confused about Jesus (because they don't understand Jesus is God).

The good news of the gospel is that King Jesus has forgiven you for all sins—past sins, sins of today, and future sins. **Jesus is greater than your sin, your guilt, and your shame.** You are forgiven, immediately and fully. You are growing in freedom to “go and sin no more.”

**CONSIDER:** What speaks to you most powerfully in the three stories of forgiveness?

**REFLECTION:** Your sins are forgiven. Guilt and shame are gone. There is no condemnation for those in Christ. How do you respond to this? Do you believe this?

**ONE FINAL WORD AND ASSIGNMENT:** If you are in the habit of saying, “I just can't forgive myself,” please stop doing that, for two reasons. First, King Jesus, who is far greater than you, has forgiven you. You are forgiven. Second, you are never instructed to forgive yourself. That is not your job. Your job is to ask for forgiveness from God (and others), receive that forgiveness, and then live in the freedom of that forgiveness. You have trouble forgiving yourself because you are not asked to do so and you don't need to do so. You are asked to and you do need to confess sin, turn away from sin, and turn toward Jesus.

## Day 3 GREATER THAN THE DEMONIC POWERS OF EVIL

LUKE 8:26-39; 11:14-26

Here are two stories of Jesus in power encounters with the demonic forces of existence. Please note, there is NO contest. The evil spirits (fallen angels) don't have a chance against King Jesus. As you read these stories, notice that those controlled and oppressed by this evil are being destroyed. That is what the thief does. **The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).** Jesus comes to give life. To give life, Jesus must break the power of the thief.

Jesus is renewing the fallen, broken, and evil world. Jesus is restoring the life taken away by thieves.

The enemies of Jesus did not deny his power to cast out demons. They just said the power of Jesus came from a greater demon. Jesus makes it very clear that his power is the power of the kingdom of God.

C.S. Lewis said there are two mistakes about the demonic world. One is to not believe in it. The other is to attribute everything to it. We want to avoid both those problems. The demonic is real, but it is only part of what is wrong with the world. Pay attention to the demonic, but don't fixate on it.

**REFLECTION:** What and who are the thieves that have stolen life from you? Think of thieves as actual, literal, figurative, and metaphorical. What has taken life away from you? And what have you lost? Make a list.

**REMEMBER:** This is why you need the better way of King Jesus. His way will be the progressive restoration of all that has been lost, all that has been taken, and all that has been denied to you.

**PRAYER:** Pray for the renewal of the kingdom of God in your life.

