

“Jesus, the King Crowned with Thorns”

Text: Matthew 27: 29-30 INI Midweek Lent 5 Wayzata 3/17/10

Coronations are usually affairs that are filled with pomp and a tremendous array of wealth. I can remember Queen Elizabeth's coronation. In movie theaters it was in color but on TV it was in black and white. Should Prince Charles or his oldest son be crowned then we will see a spectacular coronation.

There aren't many kings today so we don't get to witness many coronations. But in ancient times these things were affairs that would make most people sit up and notice. But this evening we are going to look at the king of the entire universe and his coronation before his crucifixion.. Needless to say, the people who crowned him did not really believe he was a king, not even the king of the Jews. They used that title to make fun of Him and of His people. Pilate hoped that all this would bring these people to their senses and show them just how ridiculous their charges were. Even more, show how very pathetic Jesus was. Pilate could see he posed no threat to imperial Rome.

Jesus was scourged in front of all the people to bring out their pity. He was mocked by the soldiers in full view with the consent of Pilate. Pilate had no sympathy for Jesus.

The soldiers were venting their spleen not just on this one man who was in their grasp but on their sorry lot as outpost soldiers in the armpit of the Roman Empire, Palestine. The Jews forever caused them trouble. Their treatment of one Jew supposed to be their king showed their contempt for these people.

He refused to name them because the lot that was laid out for him was the way of suffering and death. It was the way of rejection and mockery. The Romans mocked him in our story for tonight.

Kings were not humble or silent. They did not take lightly the taunts of common folk. Kings wielded power that made people shake in their boots. If he was a king he certainly did not have the air of power and authority about him like most kings did. So they degraded both him and his people by making fun of him as their king. A crown for the king! What would be more suitable to show their utter contempt?

The thorns probably came from some kind of briar. I know there's a plant called the Crown of Thorns. No one really knows if it's really the plant they made the crown from. How they cursed when a thorn poked their fingers! How deeply they gouged it into the flesh of the sinless son of God, the king of the universe!

The effect of his crowning caused even more derision. One of them got an old beat up centurions cloak and placed it around his naked, beaten body like the purple of nobility. They put a reed scepter in his hand and made an obscenity of obeisance to this newly Crowned king. Then before making their deepest bow they reined blow after blow on him. Their sadistic cruelties took over and lead them from one indignity to another. It can happen. Pilate watched it all. He took no pains to stop it. Jesus both God and man was not even treated as a man but trampled on much as a person would do to a worm.

What they had intended as mockery symbolizes the deepest of truths that we Christians believe. Jesus is our king. He rules our life with love. There will be a day when His coronation will be long remembered. It will end all history. It is decreed in splendid terms in the book of Revelation. But this hideous crowning had to be first.

Jesus certainly did not appear to be a king even before this.

His kingship would be the rule of love and service towards others not enslavement and exploitation. This coronation of Jesus shows human nature at its nadir. Jesus came because of that terrible nature.

God, Israel's king, spared not his own son but gave him up. No Kingly Father would watch his son be humiliated like Jesus was without stepping in to punish those so disrespectful to the prince. God did nothing during the mock coronation of Jesus. Just as God did nothing during the rest of the suffering and execution of his only son.

Jesus did nothing to God or man to deserve to be treated this way. They rebelled and the whole human race lost its scepter of lordship. The whole universe was cursed with these same thorns crowning Jesus. Pain and misery are symbolized. Sinful human beings are no longer in control but under the tyranny of earth, weather, and nature.

The thorns used to curse the earth might be woven into a crown and placed on Jesus head to remove the sharpness of and string of our ultimate punishment of death. We are at the mercy of disease and death. Jesus died that it might not have such strength.

We cannot expect that we will escape altogether what Jesus endured. We will have pain in our lives, elements and nature will still hold us somewhat captive, sin will still lead us to the valley of the shadow of death. But the bite and sting is removed. As Jesus felt the bite and sting of the thorns so he removed from us the ultimate bite and sting of sin. He removed the power of sin from us. He is crowned king of our lives. His death and resurrection placed him in the position of power. Now what we suffer here can never remove us from the face of God's love. Its power is not complete but only temporary.

We face difficulty and pain here but only for a while. The victory is won. We own it by God's gift to us in Jesus Christ. We was crowned in pain and throned on the cross. Seemingly defeated and humiliated before friend and enemy alike. His power, glory, and victory will be shown to be even more complete than his seeming defeat.

Certainly in our life we can humbly and patiently endure the humiliation of the world toward us, the pain of suffering and the agony of death. Jesus went through it first and is there with us when we go through it. We complain, despair, try to get even. Jesus patten is different. Sin even controls the way we suffer. Jesus died to forgive us each and every time we chafe at its coming and he rose that we might realize new life each day of our lives. He is crowned with thorns that we might in the end receive the crown of everlasting life. Amen.