The text for the sermon this morning is written in the thirty-seventh verse of the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John: “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then?”

The Gospel for this Sunday is one that always seems out of place – much like those for the First Sunday in Advent and for Palm Sunday – each present something remarkable to us. – Today, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, is questioning Jesus about whether He is a king. – Pilate represents the authority of Rome. He has soldiers at his command, the government behind him, and the power to determine what will happen to the prisoner standing before him. Jesus, on the other hand, has been arrested, accused, and handed over to the Roman authorities. – He has no army standing ready to defend Him, no royal palace, and no visible signs of the authority normally associated with a king.

By every ordinary measure of power, Pilate appears to be in control. – But there is something Pilate does not understand about the man standing before him – and today's Epistle tells us precisely what that is. – In it St. Paul describes Jesus Christ as “the image of the invisible God” and tells us that “by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.” – He goes even further, declaring that all things were

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

created by Christ and for Christ, that He is before all things, and that by Him all things consist.

Think about what that means for the scene in today's Gospel. The Roman Empire, with all its power and authority, exists – only because Christ, the eternal Son of God, sustains the whole of creation. Pilate possesses a certain authority as governor – but Christ is the One through whom all authority ultimately exists. – And yet here He stands – apparently helpless – before a man who believes himself to have the power to determine His fate. – Pilate thinks he is examining a prisoner. – In reality, he is standing before the King of all creation. And that brings us to the question at the heart of this feast: What kind of King is Jesus Christ?

When we think of kingship, we naturally think of authority, power, armies, territories, and the ability to command obedience. Those things certainly belonged to the kings and emperors of the ancient world, and in different forms they remain associated with political authority today. – But Jesus tells Pilate something that challenges his entire understanding of kingship: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence."

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

Now, we need to understand what our Lord means by those words. He is not saying that His Kingdom has nothing to do with this world, or that His authority is confined to some distant heaven with no claim upon our present lives. After all, the Epistle has just told us that all things were created by Him and for Him. – St. Augustine makes an important distinction when commenting on this passage. He points out that Jesus does not say His Kingdom is not **in** this world, but that it is not **of** this world. – His Kingdom is already present among His people, but it does not originate from the world or depend upon the worldly means by which earthly rulers establish their authority. – Christ's Kingdom does not rest upon armies, political influence, or the ability to force people into submission. Its authority comes from God, and its character is revealed most clearly through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And that brings us to something rather interesting in today's liturgy. In the Gospel, Jesus explains that His servants are not fighting to prevent His arrest because His Kingdom is not of this world. Yet later in the Mass, after receiving Holy Communion, we shall pray in the Postcommunion that we may "so glory to fight under the banner of Christ our King" that we may reign with Him forever. Now, that raises an obvious question. If Christ's servants

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

are not to fight for His Kingdom in the manner of earthly armies, why does the Church ask that we might glory in fighting beneath His banner? – The answer is that the Christian life does involve a battle – but we must understand what kind of battle it is.

St. Paul tells us in the Epistle that God has "delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." – Those are words are important. – We have not merely joined a religious organization or adopted a particular philosophy of life. – Through Jesus Christ, we have been delivered from the dominion of sin and brought into His Kingdom. Although we have been delivered from the power of darkness – that does not mean that darkness has ceased trying to draw us back. Temptation remains – sin remains a real danger – and the world continually offers us competing loyalties. – Our own desires do not always lead us toward God. – There is a battle to be fought – and much of that battle takes place within our own hearts.

We may find it relatively easy to defend the kingship of Christ when we are speaking about the failures of the world around us. We can recognize the sins of society – the errors of others – and the many ways in which people reject the commandments of God. And certainly, Christians must not be indifferent to falsehood or evil. But it is often much more difficult

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

to recognize the ways in which we ourselves resist Christ's authority. We proclaim Christ as King – but what happens when His commandments conflict with something **we** want? – What happens when He calls us to forgive someone against whom we have held a grudge for years? – What happens when following Him requires us to admit that we have been wrong – abandon a cherished sin – or change a habit we have become quite comfortable with?

It is one thing to say that Christ should rule the world. It is another to allow Him to rule our own hearts – and perhaps that is where the real battle begins.

We may be perfectly willing to defend the Faith against those who oppose it – while being considerably less enthusiastic about confronting our own pride, resentment, anger, envy, or selfishness. – Yet those are precisely the things that Christ intends to defeat within us. – The Christian soldier is not called to become a better version of the world's warriors. We are called to fight with the weapons Christ has given us – faith, prayer, truth, charity, patience, repentance, and perseverance. We are called to resist temptation, defend the truth without hatred, forgive those who have wronged us, and overcome evil with good.

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

And above all, we must remember that this is not a battle we can win by our own strength. – And that brings us back to the Epistle, because St. Paul does not begin by telling us what we must accomplish for Christ. He begins by telling us what Christ has already accomplished for us. – God has delivered us from darkness. He has brought us into the Kingdom of His Son. He has given us redemption and forgiveness through Christ's blood. – Our place in His Kingdom is not something we have earned through our own victories. It is a gift of grace – and it is that same grace which gives us strength to continue the struggle.

But there is something even more remarkable about the way Christ establishes His Kingdom. St. Paul tells us that Christ has made peace "through the blood of his cross," reconciling all things unto Himself. – Think about that for a moment. Earthly kings have often established peace by defeating their enemies and compelling them to surrender. – Christ makes peace by offering Himself for those who have rebelled against Him. – The very instrument of His apparent defeat becomes the means of His victory. St. John Chrysostom, commenting on this passage, emphasizes that Christ did not accomplish our reconciliation merely by speaking words. He accomplished it by giving Himself – through His suffering and death upon the Cross. – And there is the

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

great difference between the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world. The King of kings did not establish His Kingdom by shedding the blood of His enemies. He made peace by shedding His own.

That is why the Cross must always remain at the center of our understanding of Christ's kingship. – It reveals both the seriousness of our sin and the depth of God's love. Christ did not come merely to tell us how to become better people. He came to redeem us, to reconcile us to the Father, and to make us new.

And that brings us to the Collect appointed for this feast. In it we prayed that Almighty God, who has exalted His beloved Son to be King over all worlds and willed in Him to make all things new, would grant that the peoples of the earth, “wounded and dispersed by sin,” might be “knit together under his gracious sovereignty.”

Those words give us a beautiful picture of what Christ's reign is meant to accomplish. Sin wounds us, and sin divides us. It separates us from God and so often from one another. We see its effects in the world, in families, in communities, and sometimes even within the Church. Pride, envy, resentment, selfishness, and the refusal to forgive all have a way of pulling people apart. – But

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

Christ came to reconcile what sin has separated. – He came to heal what sin has wounded and to gather into one Body those who have been scattered. – And notice that the Collect speaks of His gracious sovereignty. Christ's kingship is not simply about exercising authority over us – it is about restoring us to the life for which God created for us.

Yet that restoration requires something of us. We cannot sincerely pray that Christ will gather the world under His gracious rule while refusing to submit to that rule ourselves. – We cannot ask Him to heal the divisions of humanity while continuing to nourish the bitterness and resentment that divide us from our own neighbors. – If Christ is truly our King, His authority must extend beyond what we say here in church. It must reach into our homes, our relationships, our conversations, our choices, and even those private thoughts and desires that nobody else can see.

And here we come back to Pilate's question: "Art thou a king then?" – Jesus answers that He has come into the world to bear witness unto the truth, and that "every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." – That is an important distinction. – It is possible to acknowledge that Christ is King – without being particularly willing to hear what He says. – We may be quite prepared to proclaim His authority in general – but much less

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

willing to obey Him when His teaching challenges our own preferences. – Yet a king is not truly acknowledged merely because his subjects know his title. His authority is acknowledged when they are willing to follow him.

And for the Christian, that means listening to the voice of Christ – even when His words are difficult. – It means accepting His correction, trusting His promises, and allowing His truth to shape the way we live. – **That** is what it means to fight under His banner. – It is not a call to hostility toward the world, but to faithfulness within it. We are called to be courageous without becoming cruel, – firm in the truth without losing charity, – and willing to stand for Christ without imagining that everyone who disagrees with us is an enemy to be defeated. – And we should never forget whose banner it is beneath which we fight – it is the banner of the Cross. The Cross reminds us that the victory belongs to Christ, that our salvation rests upon His sacrifice, and that the Christian life is one of following the King who first gave Himself for us.

In a few moments, we shall come to His altar and receive the Body and Blood of that same King. We do not come because we have already conquered every temptation or perfectly submitted every part of our lives to His rule. We come precisely because we still need His grace, His mercy, and His strength. And

 Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.

having received the food of everlasting life, we shall pray that we may faithfully fight beneath His banner. There is something especially fitting about that order – we are first nourished by Christ, and then sent out to serve Him.

Pilate asked Jesus, "Art thou a king then?" Today the Church answers that question with confidence. He is indeed the King of kings and Lord of lords, the One through whom all things were created, the One who has redeemed us by His blood, and the One whose Kingdom shall have no end. – But the feast leaves each of us with another question, and perhaps a more personal one: If Christ is truly my King, am I willing to let Him reign over me?

May we acknowledge His kingship not merely with our lips, but in the lives we lead. May we submit to His gracious rule, resist whatever would draw us away from Him, and remain faithful beneath the banner of His Cross – until that day when the struggle is ended and we enter fully into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Homily © 2026 The Ven. Michael C. Weaver, SSC. All rights reserved.