

GIFTS OF LOVE: What Have You Done?

Where your loyalty lies shapes how you live.

John 18:33-37

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WATCH/LISTEN: www.fbcjc.org/sermon/gifts-of-love-what-have-you-done/

I.

Today is Reign of Christ Sunday, also known as Christ the King Sunday. It's the final Sunday of the Christian liturgical year, a day to proclaim Jesus Christ's authority and rule over all creation. Next week, we begin the journey of Advent, the first step of a new church calendar year. But before we get to Advent, we pause to consider what it means to call Jesus our King and to be citizens of the kingdom of God.

But let me begin with a kingdom many of us know well, whether you love or hate it: Chiefs Kingdom.

In 2013, Mitch Holthus, the voice of the Kansas City Chiefs, first coined the term "Chiefs Kingdom." A kingdom is a realm of influence where someone or something rules over people, land, and/or other aspects of life.

At the time, it described a fan base deeply rooted in the Kansas City region. If you've been anywhere in Missouri or Kansas during football season, you've seen the sea of red and gold and joined the chant: "Go Chiefs!" Chiefs Kingdom is not just a fanbase; it's a community, an identity. Fans embody their allegiance, wearing the colors, memorizing stats, and sharing in rituals. You can feel the energy and connection whenever the Chiefs play and the bond they share through the up and down seasons.

Over time, as the team found success and earned national attention, Chiefs Kingdom began to expand. Today, Chiefs fans are everywhere, even internationally. Whether traveling in the U.S. or abroad, seeing someone in Chief's gear feels like running into the family, another member of the kingdom. Even if football isn't your thing—or you cheer for another team and are supremely annoyed that I've given this much time to the Chiefs—you can understand that it's powerful to belong to something bigger than yourself.

While Chiefs Kingdom is thrilling and unites people in powerful ways, it's temporary and human. Today, we're focusing on an eternal kingdom: the kingdom of God.

II.

John's Gospel today takes us into the tension-filled moments before Jesus' crucifixion, his death on the cross. Jesus stands before Pilate, the Roman governor, delivered by the religious leaders who demanded Pilate crucify him. Pilate's first question to Jesus begins a series of questions between the two: "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus isn't what Pilate expects, or perhaps he is exactly what Pilate expects - a pitiful, pathetic king of the pitiful, pathetic Jews. Pilate is used to power that comes with armies, weapons, and domination. What he sees in Jesus as he stands before him is a solitary man, bound, beaten, and abandoned by his own people. What a poor excuse for a king. Pilate presses further, mocking Jesus when he asks, "What have you done?" What have you done to make your people so angry that they demand the execution of their so-called king? What have you done that is so threatening to religious and political leaders?

What have you done, Jesus? The answer can be found in our sermon series over the past year.

Last fall, we explored meals with Jesus, where he welcomed around tables outcasts and those considered unclean or unworthy, showing that in the kingdom of God all are included. In January, we embraced how we are created anew in Christ and how being created anew leads to partnering with God to create anew in the world around us. Lent challenged us to lay down or "altar" our lives and agendas and follow Christ's sacrificial example, showing that sacrifice and service are valued in the kingdom of God.

During Eastertide, we learned to rise above hatred and live as resurrection people, embodying love and hope, which kingdom people are known for. In May, we remembered we are part of a new thing God is doing then and now as we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, share the good news and care for others. Over the summer, 1 and 2 Samuel reminded us of God's work through unexpected people and in unexpected ways, and Ephesians called us to unity as a reconciled community in Christ, no longer strangers to God or one another. Unity is a value in God's kingdom.

In August, James invited us to an active faith that partners with God to transform the world, being not only hearers but doers of the word. This fall, the Upside-Down Kingdom revealed Jesus' countercultural values of healing and welcoming the marginalized. Jesus challenged religious hypocrisy and taught us that the kingdom of God welcomes the children, the last, the least, and the blind. We should be like these and welcome them, too, if we are loyal to the kingdom of God.

And this month, we've focused on the Gifts of Love, centering on loving God and neighbor, giving generously like the widow, and trusting in Christ's eternal kingdom over earthly ones.

Over the past year, we journeyed through the life-changing teachings of Jesus—who proclaimed a new kind of kingdom, a kingdom of love, truth, and justice—from his radical hospitality, sacrificial love, and resurrection hope to the unexpected ways God works, the call to active faith, and the upside-down values of God's kingdom—culminating in a reminder that the greatest command is to love God and others wholeheartedly as we trust in Christ's eternal reign.

Each of these series has invited us to shift our loyalty away from the fleeting priorities of the world to the eternal values of Christ's kingdom.

This is why Jesus stood before Pilate. Jesus' kingdom disrupts the status quo. In Pilate's world, power is about fear and force. In Jesus' kingdom, power is about love and truth. Jesus embodied a different kind of power from the very moment Jesus moved into our neighborhood as a baby — the power of servanthood, humility, love, and sacrifice. The one brought before Pilate in Jerusalem is the same one born in a forgotten, remote shelter with lowly animals and shepherds. The one who lay in a feeding trough, with Mary's milk on his lips, now stands before Pilate, unwavering in his mission.

When Pilate presses, Jesus responds: "My kingdom is not from this world." This doesn't mean Jesus' kingdom is detached from Earth; it means it is very much present here and now, but it operates inversely from the world because it is not from this world. The kingdom of Jesus is from God. It is not some rival or third-party option for control over the political world— it's God's radical, life-giving alternative to the world as it is!

Pilate's misunderstanding of Jesus shows us that where your loyalty lies shapes how you live. Pilate clung to Rome's power structure and was loyal to Rome's values, while Jesus announced a kingdom built on servanthood and love, a kingdom that went against all Pilate was loyal to and what shaped his life.

The world still doesn't embrace Jesus' kingdom. Jesus' values disrupt the systems of greed, pride, control, and violence that dominate the world. His way of love threatens the powerful. But here's the beauty and power of Jesus' kingdom: it's through the cross that His kingdom is established. Jesus' kingship is demonstrated not in a palace but on Calvary, not in taking up arms but laying down his life. And through His sacrifice, we are invited to be part of something eternal and life-transforming, something far greater than the Chief's kingdom.

"What Have You Done?" is not just a question from Pilate to Jesus. It is a question to us, too. What have we done in response to what Jesus has done? Do our lives reflect the absolute loyalty and identity of citizens in His kingdom, or are we distracted by temporary allegiances to worldly "kingdoms" that have influence or control over our lives?

V.

I'm not here to convert you to the Chief's kingdom today, but it can teach us something about what it means to be converted or transformed into kingdom people.

Like Chiefs fans carry their identity wherever they go—wearing red and gold, singing chants, connecting with fellow fans—we are called to carry the identity of Jesus' kingdom in our lives. One man radically converted to Christ, the Apostle Paul, tells us in Colossians 3 what it looks like to live as those who belong to the kingdom of God.

He writes, "Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in

perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:12-17)

Like dedicated football fans,

1. **Wear the colors** - Just as Chiefs fans wear red and gold, followers of Christ clothe themselves in compassion, kindness, humility, and love. These “colors” show the world where our loyalty lies.
2. **Learn the chants** - Chiefs fans have their anthem; as Christians, our prayers, songs, and all of our conversations should proclaim Jesus’ truth, grace, and love.
3. **Build a Community of Belonging** - Chiefs Kingdom connects strangers through a shared passion. The kingdom of God connects us through shared love, calling us to bear with one another, forgive, and encourage each other as Christ did.

The reign of Christ is not about domination but about laying down His life for His people. From the manger to the cross, Jesus shows us a different kind of power and calls us to a different kind of loyalty.

Where your loyalty lies shapes how you live. If our loyalty is to Christ, it will be evident in our priorities, relationships, and actions. Chiefs’ fans are passionate, loyal, and bold in their identity. What if we brought that same energy to living as citizens of Jesus’ kingdom? What if we wore the “colors” of compassion, kindness, justice, and mercy so boldly that people couldn’t help but notice? What if our prayers and songs became the anthem of a world hungry for hope and something more meaningful? What if our community—this church—became a place where people found belonging, love, and truth?

Where your loyalty lies shapes how you live. When people look at your life, what loyalty do they see?

Let’s live in a way that answers Pilate’s question - what have you done? As people so completely loyal to the kingdom of God that it shapes how we live, we proclaim a new kind of kingdom of love, truth, and justice. We practice radical hospitality, sacrificial love, and the upside-down values of God’s kingdom. We love God and others wholeheartedly as we trust in Christ’s eternal reign over any earthly kingdom.

Where your loyalty lies shapes how you live. Let’s live as people who belong to a kingdom not of this world but of love, truth, and grace. A kingdom for the glory of God and the good of the world. Amen.

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All scripture quoted is from the NRSVUE unless otherwise noted.