

Reading: John 18:33-37

One of the things I really like about New Zealand is how approachable our leaders are. It is not so in other countries. In 2003 I was in Malaysia staying in a church house. A young couple in the congregation were getting married. The word came to me that they had invited me to their wedding. I was of course honoured and never one to turn down free food I went. While sitting at the table enjoying the amazing food, a small delegation came over. "The local senator will soon be here," they said, "you need a little background," they told me. "Don't speak to him unless he speaks to you first, bow in a dignified manner and under no circumstance say the 'c' word." I thought I could do the first two, but what was the c word. Maybe I thought he has cancer and can't face talking about it. Being a naive kiwi I took one of the guests to one side, "I don't want to appear stupid, but what is the c word." "He took me over to a darkened corner. And whispered it in my ear, "Corruption. The senator is on charges of corruption but don't for the life of you mention it." The moment came; I bowed, made small talk being ever so careful not to mention corruption and he moved on. If I had mentioned corruption I would no doubt be preaching to you from a Malaysian jail.

Today we are given a snapshot into Jesus before another governor. Jesus is before Pilate. The Jewish leaders want Jesus dead but they don't want any grief from his followers so they delegate the decision to Pilate. Pilate looks at Jesus and no doubt the word emphasis expresses his irony. "Are **you** the king of the Jews?" Jesus isn't overawed by the governor's interrogation. He doesn't confirm or deny being a king but rather rudely wonders aloud if Pilate could have worked this out for himself. If Jesus wanted to be a king like Pilate understood it he would have had his disciples fighting in the streets. Jesus instead is a non violent, non corrupt, approachable king. What would it be like to have a leader you could approach at any time, say anything to, totally trust and know that you will always get a truthful answer.

During the American Civil War things got pretty grim. And one of the soldiers was complaining to his officer. "I am sick of this war" he said, "and all it stands for. If I could have just a moment with the President, I sure would like to give him a piece of my mind." "I can arrange that for you," said the officer. To the soldier's great surprise the officer said, "Follow me." So the officer lead the private through the streets of Washington, past the armed guard at the gate of the White House, no questions asked, past the sentry at the door of the mansion, they waved him through without a word, the staff of the house didn't even seem to notice he was there, the officer opened the door of the war cabinet room and without a word of challenge from anyone the officer walked right up to Abraham Lincoln. He looked the President in the eye and said, "This man would like a word with you," and then came the critical word, "father." You see the man that the soldier had complained to was none other than Abraham Lincoln's son. As his son he had complete and unbridled access to the President.

Our approachable king Jesus also has total access to the Father. He has complete and unbridled access to God the father. We can talk with Jesus 24/7, anywhere, anytime. No other king is as approachable as Jesus. He wants to listen. He only wants the best for us. Other leaders ask us to lay down our lives for them - (for King and Country). Jesus is the king who lays down his life for us in order that we might have eternal life. He is not limited by time and space, and he doesn't surround himself with heavies, just grace and truth.

Today is the last Sunday of the church year. Next week we begin Advent, the preparation season for Christmas. And this Sunday goes by the name Christ the King Sunday. It reminds us that Jesus is a king like no other. He is totally approachable and without a hint of corruption; he is totally there for us.

I'm not the first to notice the difference between Jesus the King and other leaders. Napoleon Bonaparte the one who took over Europe wrote ...

I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him.

So as you approach King Jesus today what would you ask of him? You have an audience with the Sovereign of the universe. Maybe you come in gratitude for the wonders of your life, or maybe you come wanting to give him a piece of your mind. No matter, don't be afraid, Jesus wants to hear, Jesus wants to talk with you. Whether you are in joy or sadness, confusion or insight, whether you need direction or just company, Jesus is there for you.

John Monsell, a vicar of the 19th century wrote a well known hymn that puts it more beautifully than I can. John was born in 1811 and died in 1867 He died trying to fix the roof of the church from which he fell to his death. But before he fell, he wrote the hymn 'O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness'. It speaks to us of the approachability of Jesus, our King.

"Fear not" he wrote "to enter his courts in the slenderness of the poor wealth you would count as your own, truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness these are the offerings to bring to his throne.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus

You are a king like no other

Your throne room of grace is always open to us and we need not fear,

Grant us to so open our hearts to you

That we might grow in deeper companionship with you this day and every day.

Amen