

Not Who They Expected

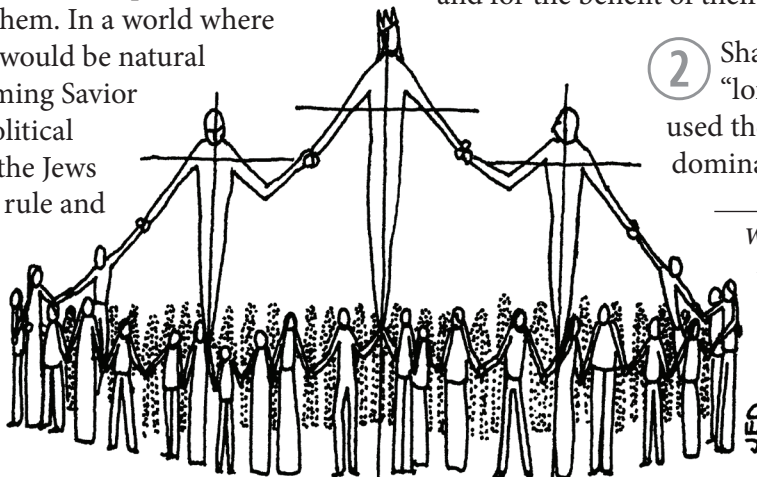
This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ 2 Samuel 5:1-3 - David anointed king
- ▶ Colossians 1:12-20 - Christ is before and above all things
- ▶ Luke 23:35-43 - The crucified king

On this feast day of Christ the King, the first reading tells us of King David's anointing as the king of Israel. He was the one that unified the twelve tribes of Israel and brought them together as a people for the first time. Ever since, he has been upheld as *the* preeminent king in Jewish history.

Many of the misunderstandings about Jesus' identity stem from the fact that he did not fit the description of what the Jews were expecting in a king who was the "son of David." They expected a military warrior who would save them from the oppression of whoever the current ruling empire was. They thought he would usher in an everlasting reign of national peace. They certainly didn't expect a king like Jesus who sided with the poor and the outcast and had no patience for social climbing. They never expected a king who would resist all manner of violence, even to the point of accepting suffering on the cross rather than lashing out in retaliation.

At the heart of the celebration of Christ the King (which always falls on the last Sunday of the year before Advent begins) is an understanding of Jesus as a king who talked and acted very differently from the descendant of David whom the Jews expected. When Jesus walked the earth, Jews were looking forward to a king who would once again unify their country and liberate them from the world powers who historically oppressed them. In a world where "might makes right," it would be natural to presume that the coming Savior would be a powerful political figure who would lead the Jews in throwing off Roman rule and reestablishing national independence. Such a king would naturally enjoy the prestige, wealth, and trappings of a worldly kingdom.



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“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Sheepish Question:
What is my place in God's house?

No wonder so many Jews had trouble coming to terms with Jesus' behavior or flatly denied that he was their expected savior. No wonder Jewish rulers, Roman soldiers, and a condemned criminal mocked Jesus as "the King of the Jews" at his crucifixion. Jesus rejected any nationalism that included violence or oppression, and he preached love of enemies instead of the death of enemies. His refusal to play the part of a worldly king went so far that he refused to use his divine powers to save himself from horrific suffering.

Questions of the Week

- 1 Give examples of worldly rulers in history who used their power and authority appropriately and for the benefit of their people.
- 2 Share examples of rulers who "lorded it over others" and used their power to exploit and dominate people.

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