

Pilate asked Jesus, “So you are a king?” And Jesus answers, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to this truth.

But Jesus is not acting like any sort of king Pilate is familiar with.

If Jesus were a king—he would have an army. If he had an army, they would come in great numbers and mount a rescue. They would save him. That is – after all one of our strongest human drives- to be safe—to save ourselves.

We want to save ourselves the trouble.

We want to save ourselves from pain.

We want to save ourselves from catastrophe, from making a mess of our lives, from bad decisions.

It’s a vital goal of all video games. The goal is to save ourselves. And to win. How can we win if we don’t save ourselves after all? And how can a man be a king if he doesn’t win? Isn’t that weak?

And that’s why Pilate is so baffled: save yourself, save yourself--and win.

Jesus could have don’t that, if he’d wanted. It doesn’t seem to have been his goal.

In fact, his goal seemed to have been the opposite. His goal was to surrender himself. And this is odd to our ears. I seem to recall popular books, movies and videos with the opposite view: ***never surrender, never give up, never give in.***

But that's just what Jesus has in mind. Complete surrender. Not very kinglike.

And another un-kinglike thing: have you ever noticed how Jesus doesn't bluster and make threats? He answers briefly, then remains silent.

How *unlike us* this is. When we are falsely accused of something don't most of us instantly become defensive? Argue with our accuser? Try to right their wrong ideas?

I have a theory about this. Sometimes I think we argue more when are a little unsure of ourselves, our ideas. I told a parishioner a few weeks ago that I would give him an insight into my character. I told him that when he suggests a course of action or challenges something I have said—and I defend myself, argue passionately, put up a fight—there will always be the possibility that he could change my mind.

But-- I told him-- if he suggests something, or challenges me *and I don't argue*, just nod and smile—there is not a chance he will change my mind. When we are certain of ourselves and our cause, there is no need to argue.

Jesus seems to follow this pattern. Sometimes he will argue back—like with the Samaritan woman at the well, and then—he changes his mind. But when he doesn't respond, or responds with calm certainty it is clear that he is certain about himself and his mission.

He doesn't argue with his accusers, he lets his life be his witness. Actions speak louder than words.

Jesus is about to sacrifice his life, and that action reverberated through history.

Jesus' ability to experience his life-- and death-- without resisting it, without defending it, speaks to a whole new dimension of human wholeness. Wholeness, to him, means stepping beyond the drive to survive— to save yourself. Jesus doesn't need to *win*.

Jesus himself said it-- There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

A king in our world is all about power and glory. But Jesus surrendered, and we hear about his surrender on Christ the King Sunday every year. There is a connection.

A king to Jesus is primarily concerned with the welfare of the people, and that concern allows him to give his life away for others.

Could it be that we are wrong, and saving ourselves is not really the goal of life? Maybe the true goal of life is to give everything away.

Our king is leading us to surrender to generous justice, generous compassion, generous understanding, generous love. And to give ourselves away fully to those things.

Our king asks us to surrender what keeps us from those things, so we can help him to build a generous kingdom. Amen.