

## **“WHOSE KINGDOM” BY REV. LAURA NORRIS-BUISCH- November 21, 2021**

Do you remember back in the Old Testament? Israel wanted a King more than anything! A King so that it could be just like every other nation. The King is the one who the Israelites thought would follow them into battle to conquer, to overthrow, to dominate another country. Dominance of a region! A King is one who has authority! A King is one who wages war for their subjects. So, think about that for a minute! Do you have an image of a King from the Old Testament? Pick one! Pick any of them. Let's go with King Nebuchadnezzar. He ruled & he conquered other nations. So, now think about a King today. Let's think about the King of Sweden or the Queen of England, a very different King, right, from King Nebuchadnezzar. The King of Sweden & the Queen of England--- It's just really, uh, what would you say about that? It's just a phase of somebody. They don't really reign. They don't have control but that's really what the Israelites wanted back in their day. They wanted a King to lead the country. So we jump into that mentality. A King who is a dominant person. A King who has authority. A King who wages war against other nations. For you see that is the moment that Jesus comes on the scene. That's who He is, someone that conquers other nations. So the Israelites were waiting for this King to come in. Waiting for the King to lift them up. Waiting for the King to change their lives. So Jesus comes in. Jesus was born where? In a manger! Jesus went out on a donkey. Jesus is the "kind of lowly person who came to speak truth! Jesus came to heal the sick! Cure the lame! Sacked with outcasts & sinners! Talk to widows & children, talk to the very people, most of the people of that time considered cursed, it's really a Kingdom for one that is established. On injustice & fear, Jesus is reigning! It's very different! It's a kind of different Kingdom. It's one that pushes against injustice & the Chief Priests & the leaders of the Jews pushed against that because they had their place. Hey, I got a question for you! Do you know of somebody that stands in front of people & puffs themselves up & wants to be the center of what it's like? Does that make sense to you? To be the center of attention? Do you know anybody like that? Okay, so I know several people like that! What is it about the people that want the best place to sit in, a place of honor. Jesus called people out who were like this time & time again! "Hey, you with long prayers." "Why do you sit at the head table when others are not invited?" That's who Jesus came for: It's the outcasts & the sinners. He came for

you & me! He came for those who were sick & vulnerable & yet Pilate asked “Are you the King of the Jews?” & Jesus said, “My Kingdom is not from here!” that’s really what got Him in trouble! Think about it? When you push against the Chief Priests & you’re a little more, what would I say “charismatic”, would you say that Jesus was charismatic? Yes! & He really didn’t care what people thought about Him. He just knew that God had given Him a task to preach the Good News to all people, all people, not just what somebody would call the best people, the ones that were dressed just right, the ones that prayed in front of the whole world. Jesus came for the little people & I would say that He came for you & me. That’s the Kingdom that Jesus came into not this Kingdom that was filled with violence & pushing against people. Jesus came to live the reign of love, of kindness & of welcome.

I don’t know if you’ve ever been in a church like this but one church that I was in----- How many of you are Presbyterian Women? Do you have a Presbyterian Women’s group here? Thank you! So, one of the things in the church in Shortsville, NY which is just north of Canandaigua. There was this very powerful woman. Her name was Margaret (not Margaret Bowen) but Margaret ran that church with an iron fist. Have you ever been to a church like that where one person ran the church? Margaret who was in her 90s, & let me tell you she knew everything & whatever happened in the church. If Margaret didn’t know about it then it probably didn’t happen! You know the ladies I’m talking about? Ah. Thank you! I got one nod. There’s some very powerful women around & it’s very funny because the person that said something to me “Oh, that’s Margaret’s church.” I said “No, I don’t think it’s Margaret’s church, I think it’s Jesus Christ’s church!”

I think that so often we get confused about whose Kingdom we live in! It’s Jesus’ Kingdom. It’s not yours & mine! No matter who stands in the pulpit or no matter who is in charge, it begins with Christ! I know this church well! You are full of mission & full of love! You’re doing what God has chosen for you to do! To bring in those that we consider the least of these: the outcasts, the women, the children, all of what God’s Kingdom in Jesus Christ is all about because it’s about Jesus--- the beginning & the end! If we’re not preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if we’re preaching the gospel of Margaret, & I’m pretty sorry that I know Margaret & I knew Margaret Bowen, so I’m sorry they have the same first name

but I'm talking about Margaret from Shortsville. To be very clear, it is not one person's Kingdom but it is Christ's Kingdom! We live with that & it's very different from our society because it's based on love, it's based on grace, it's based on even forgiveness & light. How often do we forget? That it is God who we look at. It's God who gives us the truth. It is Christ who loves & protects & gives us grace! So, I really wonder whose Kingdom is it? Is it our Kingdom or is it the one we live by Christ's Kingdom?

Now when you think about Pilate & you think about all the things that were happening with Jesus at the time, He began to take power away from those who thought they had much. That's when He got in trouble, that's when He ended up on the cross, that's when He gave His life for the sins of the world. So I wonder on this reigning of Christ Sunday, with everything that the Church does, this church, would they say that that's Christ's church? I wonder if they would say that about Riverside, about First Presbyterian Church downtown or Island Presbyterian Church on Grand Island. Is that Christ's Church? Yes! That's Christ's church, they believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The first thing in their mind in what they say & do! Would they say that you are kind & would they say you were graceful, would they say that you were compassionate? Would they say that I am, would they say that Pastor Lisa is or Kathy of First & Island Churches)? Would they say that Ron (Clements) is kind? How about each of us? Are we kind & loving because that's the Kingdom of Christ. It's not about each of us, it is about Christ. So, whose Kingdom do you love? Do you live in a just & loving & graceful Kingdom or do you live where people fight & arm themselves because they think they need to be the best.

Jesus said, "This is not my Kingdom. My Kingdom is not from here. Then whose Kingdom do you follow. AMEN!