

## WHO'S IN CHARGE?

2 Samuel 23:1-7  
Revelation 1:4b-8  
John 18:33-38

Faith Community  
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### Introduction

There are many kings in our lives. That is to say you and I face lots of authorities as we go about living each day. There are teachers and doctors, policemen and military officials, governors and presidents. They all want us to obey what they tell us to do. Often in our lives we have to decide which of these authorities we will follow.

Today is known as “Christ the King” in the church calendar – it is a time to remind ourselves who is in charge.

### I

God is the Lord of our lives. That means that God has authority over everything in our lives – from the daily decisions we make about how to handle a business deal, to the amount of time we spend with our children. It affects my life as a husband, father, employee, and even as a citizen.

In our scripture today from II Samuel, David talks about the politics of God as Lord. David says that God wants a ruler who serves the people with justice – one who governs by the will of God. It’s interesting that David says this because he was looked at as the king who ruled better than anyone else. David was held up as the epitome of the finest rulers in Israel.

But when we look at David’s rule, it wasn’t just what he did that made him great. He knew there was a higher authority above him. God used prophets like Nathan to go to David and bluntly tell him when he was doing wrong. David responded to even harsh criticism because he understood that it came from God, and the criticisms were right.

David realized that even as king, there was a higher authority.

### II

In our lives we have several authorities. For one thing, we are citizens of a country. Preacher William Willimon says that being Christian is like being a person who carries two passports with him. Here’s what he says: “It is as if you bear two passports. One says that you are a citizen of this country, your native or adopted land. Another says that you belong to the people of the covenant, that you, like King David, are answerable to a higher standard of judgment than your own conscience or even the laws of our state. Your life and actions are to be judged by how well they conform to the plans and purposes of the Creator. Your way in the world must be that way that leads toward the foolishness of the cross, rather than the wisdom of the world.

“Therefore we must gather, on a regular basis, at least once every week, to do politics. That is, to have among ourselves a debate over the basic political question, ‘Who is in charge here?’”

So, when God is lord of our lives, God is lord of everything in our lives. Everything.

### III

God is not like the other rulers in our life. Most of the people we know who are in charge are interested in power or prestige. They know they are the bosses and they want to make sure everybody else knows it too. They are interested in control and having things done their way. They may be most interested in having good things for themselves. The salaries of executives are hotly debated today. People ask, why should a leader of a company make one hundred or a thousand times as much as the people who actually make the product?

Powerful people enjoy the excessive perks that go with the job. Dennis Kozlowski, the CEO of Tyco Corp., got in trouble when he threw a two million dollar party for his wife’s fortieth birthday. He charged the bill to his company. It was a lavish abuse of his perks.

God is very different. Rather than giving himself excessive gifts, Christ allows himself to suffer, even die for his people. Jesus leadership was like the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah. Jesus loves his people so much that he is willing to suffer for them, to be arrested and persecuted, and even die on their behalf. Jesus’ mission is more important than the comfort or perks or pay. He gives everything in obedience to his call.

### IV

So many rulers today use their power to lord it over people. As we have learned about the tyrannical rule of Saddam Hussein, we see a dictator who, not only lived a lavish lifestyle at the expense of his suffering people, but ruled ruthlessly.

He put down anyone who disagreed with him or dared to defy him. We’ve all heard stories of torture and abuse. He is a horrid example of the abuse of power.

He is certainly the extreme, but so many people who have authority misuse that power. Rulers often resort to coercion and manipulation in order to keep their citizens or employees under their thumb.

Our Lord gave us an example of leadership that is the opposite of these kinds of tactics. Jesus doesn’t coerce. He doesn’t manipulate people; he doesn’t have to coerce anyone to maintain his authority, because it is not in danger. No one can take from him what God has given him. Abuse so often comes from insecurity; Jesus has no insecurity about who he is.

## V

Christ is king of our lives, and stands above every other authority. We do carry at least two passports – one of them is the passport of commitment to Christ. That is the one we honor above everything else. No ruler, no authority, no law or government stands above our allegiance to God.

Many Christians face the dilemma of this reality everyday. In some parts of the world it is not safe to be a Christian. Some rulers punish those who follow the way of Jesus. These people frequently have to choose between obeying their ruler or obeying their Lord.

One of the most interesting passages in Acts is the account of Peter and John when they are arrested for preaching about Jesus after Jesus' death and resurrection. When they are released from jail the authorities tell them not to be preaching like this anymore. The disciples turn to these authorities and say, "We can obey you, or we can obey our Lord". You can put us in jail if you like, but we cannot stop preaching.

When faced with the decision of who would be their king, they had no choice but to obey God, whatever the cost might be. Hopefully we don't find ourselves with that kind of choice to make. But if we do, there is no choice; we know what we must do.

### **Conclusion**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a young pastor and teacher in Germany as Hitler came to power. He saw early on that this ruler was demonic and hateful. Even though Hitler was the leader of his government, Bonhoeffer knew that his real authority in life opposed what Hitler was doing. Bonhoeffer worked against Hitler and after a number of years he was arrested for his work. Bonhoeffer was executed just one day before the Americans liberated the prison camp where he was being held.

Bonhoeffer gave his life because he understood that although there are many authorities in our lives, there is only one ultimate authority. Christ is king of our lives.

Amen