

“Still the Peoples’ Champion”

Revelation 1:4-8
John 18:33-37

Liturgically, today is Christ the King Sunday. “Christ the King Sunday focuses our worship *and attention* on the cosmic character of Christ’s reign over the world. It is a proclamation to all that everything in creation and culture must submit to Christ and an invitation to actively and joyfully submit to Christ’s rule as King.” For some, Christ the King Sunday marks the end of the liturgical year, also recognizing that Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical year. Others have come to recognize the important of Christ the King Sunday as a preface, helping remind us that Christmas is about much more than a baby in a manger- it is about a sovereign Christ who came to be the “Prince of Peace.”

As we are inspired and enlightened by the readings in Revelation and John, which clearly proclaim the Lordship, Kingship, and sovereign reign of Christ over the world, I want to bring to attention that this declaration about Christ is not just something that happened one day in history. Despite the efforts of evil and darkness, culture and worldly pressures, doubt and fear, popularity and temporary preference, Christ is still King. And as the King, we are still called to crown Jesus with many crowns and hail the power of Jesus’ name.

There are two illustrations I found helpful in inspiring me to remember “Christ the King” and I hope you will find them inspirational as well. The first is a movie.

A couple weeks ago, I rewatched a movie called “Real Steel”. Have you ever heard of it or seen it before? Traditionally, I am not much of a Syfy, robotics, or technology guy but I do like action movies, and because I had seen it before I knew it had good action. What I may have underestimated in the first go around was the power of its storyline. In summary, “Real Steel” is a movie about boxing robots who fight to be the world champion. The storyline includes Hugh Jackman as a washed-up boxer and dad trying to make a life gone bad work by salvaging parts of robots. In his climbing out of the cellar, his son, who travels with him into some not so child-friendly places, discovers an old and beaten-up G2 sparring bot that had been discarded into a pile of scraps. The dad blows off the tiny bot as a has been (speaking from experience) but the son insists on taking him home.

As the story of “Real Steel” unfolds, the belief of the son in the G2 bot named “Atom” begins to carry Jackman’s life out of the gutter and into glory. “Atom”, with his companions, enters fights the underdog and exits the victor. Over and over again, people are amazed at how this small and old sparring bot could compete with the newer modern and advanced creations. The difference is faith, heart, and will. The difference is belief in something more than the metal in the ring.

For me, the climax of the movie comes at the conclusion of Atom's first professional match in which he is victor. Upon victory, the boy challenges the reigning World Champion "Zeus", who has been declared by all in the profession as unbeatable, to a fight and says anytime and anywhere. The creators of "Zeus" smirk and shrug off the tiny bot and boy as if it is a waste of time. Eventually though, the fight does occur, and "Atom" faces off against "Zeus" in the ring for the battle of World Champion.

As the battle begins, it takes less than 5 seconds for "Zeus" to knock "Atom" to the mat. After taking the massive blow "Atom" rose. "Atom" made it through round 1 and then through round 2. At points, "Atom" was able to deliver a few blows to "Zeus". The longer the battle raged, the better the opportunities "Atom" had to overcome "Zeus" and exploit weaknesses. "Atom" managed to knock "Zeus" down a couple times, and it took a while, but "Zeus" continued to persist. So did "Atom". At the conclusion of the battle, both bots are standing, and the winner is left to a ruling by the judges.

In the center of the ring, the announcer reports, "The winner is, and still the World Champion, Zeus." The announcer then turns to the boy to ask how he feels. The announcer begins by saying, "Zeus may still be the champion of the world, but people are saying "Atom" is the peoples' champion. What do you think about that?" The boy replied, "Yeah, I can live with that." Just then, Atom picks the boy up and hoists him into the air.

Maybe it is a stretch for some or maybe not, but as I think about Christ and which title Christ would want, I can't think of one instance in which he wouldn't first choose peoples' champion. The world, with all the glitz and glamour, attempts to trick us into thinking Christ is obsolete, old, and beaten up. The world attempts to tell us that new champions arise to replace the former. That may be true for the world, which simply settles on the next shaky ground, but not with Christ. Christ is a solid rock in which we can stand firm; never shaken and never moved. Still today, Christ stands firm in the battle against the world and fights for us. We must believe in hope and live like Christ is still Christ; that Christ is still the peoples' champion. No matter the world's attempts to reign on high, and there will be many along the way who declare the world as the ultimate champion, Christ will always reign higher and higher as the true peoples' champion.

The second illustration I found helpful in inspiring me to remember "Christ the King" is the song "Yes He Can", by Cain.

The song lyrics begin with question and doubt. "Sometimes I wonder, is He faithful? Does He see me in my trouble? Does He understand? Sometimes I question if He's able, can He rescue, can He save me again and again?" "Voices tell us a different story: Are we forgotten?"

Can He deliver us from fear and nerves and anxiety and worry? Are you someone who doesn't know how to have a conversation with someone? What do I say? How do I begin? Picture a young man and woman on a first date and the boy is nervous. He is afraid and doesn't know what to say. Do I be myself? Is that enough to impress her? What do I say to impress her?

Can He deliver us from low self-esteem and doubt? Are you someone who questions your ability to do something? Maybe you have even seen yourself fail a time or twelve? Picture a small youth playing basketball and unable to get the ball to the hoop. She misses over and over. Her head hangs low, and she doubts whether she will ever be able to see the ball into the hoop.

Can He deliver us from a surgical procedure and weakness? Are you someone who has fought hard to only have more pain? Maybe you are currently in the process of rehabilitating? Picture a man sitting on a doctor's table strained in pain and unable to take even one step.

Can He deliver us from exhaustion and steep mountains to climb? Are you someone who feels like you are just moving backward? Maybe the task at hand right now seems unbearable and impossible? Picture a young mother pushing a stroller up a hill, each step harder than the last.

Then the chorus declares the Good News of Christ, "Did he move every mountain? Did he part every sea? Did he defeat the darkness? Can he deliver me? Yes, He did! Yes, He can!"

Christ, still the peoples' champion, has, does, and will continue to, fight for us and empower us! Christ, still the peoples' champion, delivers us from fear and nerves and anxiety and worry, giving us the words to say and the courage to be our true selves. Christ may even lead us to courage enough to hold another's hand. Christ, still the peoples' champion, delivers us from low self-esteem and doubt, giving us confidence and courage to persevere and endure. Christ may even lead us to seeing our first shot go "swish". Christ, still the peoples' champion, delivers us from illness and weakness, giving us physical strength to stand again, and when we think never, Christ says "Now"; now is the time to take that next step. Christ, still the peoples' champion, delivers us from weariness and heavy lifts, giving us bravery and hope that spurs us on for the care of a loved one.

How Christ does it exactly may be a mystery and that is where our faith comes in. In faith, we come to experience Christ working through the power of God given to us in the Holy Spirit and through the power of God given to us through the faithful action of others. Picture in all the scenarios I mentioned with the song lyrics a group of people cheering the people on in love and support and guidance. There are cheerleaders with posters encouraging the young man

on his date a group of cheerleaders on the sideline watching the young girl shoot baskets. There is a doctor who serves in healing and there is a train of folks who get in line to help push the young mother and stroller ahead. In faith, Christ the King, the peoples' champion, lives in us and empowers us to be the body of Christ, witnesses embodying Christ's way.

John 3:16-17, ""For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."

Christ is still the King. Christ is still the peoples' champion. Let us all crown Him with many crowns and hail the power of Jesus' name.

Yes!!! Yes, He did!!! Yes, He Can!!!!