

November 25, 2018

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

Title: "Elvis and the King"

The Rev. Susan Sparks, senior pastor of Madison Avenue Baptist Church in New York City gave a talk once contrasting two kings, Elvis Presley, the king of Rock 'n Roll and Jesus, the King of all creation. She notes that many people still are really devoted to Elvis even now, forty-four years after his death.

She says that she traveled to Memphis to see the sites, first she went to Sun Records, where Elvis recorded his first song. In the studio, there was an "X" marked on the floor with duct tape indicating the exact spot where Elvis stood. The tour guide told them that just a couple of years ago, Bob Dylan had come into the studio, said not a word to anyone, walked over to the "X," got down on all fours, kissed it and walked out. Now that's a tribute from one rock legend to another.

Rev. Sparks then went to Graceland, Presley's home. As she waited in line to buy tickets, she turned to one of the tour guides and asked, "So, how long did Elvis actually live here?" There was a gasp from those standing nearby. The guide looked at her with shock and whispered, "We don't use the past tense here." She then pointed at her tee shirt, which read: "Graceland, where Elvis LIVES."

"It didn't matter that she'd never actually seen him. It didn't matter. She didn't care. Elvis fans don't care. Without any proof, they believe he lives! Elvis lives, baby. The King lives . . ."

"And because of that," Rev Sparks comments, "Elvis fans go out into in the

world and share his message. They play Elvis' music; they dress up as Elvis impersonators; they decorate their homes with his memorabilia.”

Today is the last Sunday of the Christian year. On our church calendar we call it “Christ the King” Sunday. Here’s a simple and maybe obvious question that I want to pose to you today is this: who is the king of your life?

In our lesson from John’s Gospel, Pilate is interrogating Jesus before his crucifixion. “Are you king of the Jews?” he asks. If Pilate thought he could intimidate Jesus, he was sorely mistaken. If Pilate thought he was in control of this situation he was also mistaken. Yes, he could turn Jesus over to the mob to be persecuted, but if he did, he would simply be following the plan of God, that the Son of God would give his life that all God’s children might one day find life through him. But once again I ask, “Who’s your king?”

Everybody worships something or somebody. If it’s not Christ, it’s probably something or someone less worthy. Theologian Paul Tillich put it this way, he said, “...whatever is our ultimate concern in life, that is our God.” It might be our appearance or our safety, or our bank account; it might be Elvis Pressley, or some other media star or a host of other things. It might be getting everyone to like you or an obsession with what others think about them.

What is it in life that you value most--that you would not only die for, but also live for? Be careful how you answer. It’s a hard question. Some would say, “Jesus is what matters most in my life.” And yet, when the time of testing comes, we discover that it’s not Jesus. It’s the esteem with which our friends hold us that

really matters most. Some will say your family. And that's good. However, where does God come in with love for family?

Researcher George Barna says that studies show that far more people are willing to die for their country than they are their faith. What does that mean? Who is your king, I ask?

Biblical faith insists that God alone is worthy of our worship. Such faith, of course, will demand sacrifice. I read an article about a person who was willing to make Christ king of his life. Before co-founding Habitat for Humanity, Millard Fuller was a successful businessman who one day followed his estranged wife Linda to New York to try to convince her to come back to him. She wasn't easily convinced that he could turn back from his focus on making money ahead of everything else.

Millard recalls: "We were in a taxi right after Linda and I had a very tearful session. We'd gone to Radio City Music Hall and they showed the movie *Never Too Late*. It was about a woman getting pregnant after she thought it was too late. The message was that it's never too late to change anything. I had a sensation of light in that taxi. It wasn't anything spooky. All I can say is it just came into my head: Give your money away, make yourself poor again and throw yourself on God's mercy. I turned to Linda and said, 'I believe that God just gave me the idea to give all our money away; give everything away.' "She said, 'I agree. Let's do it.'"

Friends, family, even pastors tried to talk them out of it. But Millard Fuller

believed that God was calling them to live a radical new life, and they ended up building one of the great ministries for helping people of modern times, Habitat for Humanity. They gave everything away. Not everyone is called to make a sacrifice like that, but would you be willing to if Jesus asked you to?

Everybody worships something or somebody. Ultimately, if we don't worship Christ, we worship ourselves. The only problem with that is that we can't save ourselves. Is Christ King of your life? If so, does it show? Amen.