

Reign of Christ

Reign of Christ (Christ the King) Sunday brings us full circle in the liturgical year. Today, our texts show us the circle of hope in which our faith is grounded and our lives transformed: God's covenant, Christ's reign, and the Spirit's abiding presence.

Focus scripture: John 18:33–37

Jesus' faithful witness to the truth in John 18:33–37 is a model for the early Christians and Christians today. Pilate, the imperial governor of Judea, needs to know who Jesus is in terms of the powers and authorities of this world. The truth that motivates Jesus is of a different sort entirely. Their exchange draws a stark contrast between Pilate, a man who, with a word, can send troops anywhere he desires, and Jesus, a wordsmith who, with parables about lost children and loving our enemies, upsets notions about God and how God operates. The governor who holds life and death in his hands meets the one who offers his life for the life of all.

Pilate represents an empire whose foundation is might, whose reality is power, whose leader is a god. Jesus offers the vision of a different realm, one which is grounded in seeming powerlessness, whose leader is a servant. This is the truth to which Jesus gives testimony, he was born to usher in this reign.

Truth cannot be accessed by any rational understanding or turning to some textbook, but by revelation. This truth is not a philosophy Jesus offers, but is grounded deep within his being as God's son. This truth is not a static belief, but is dynamically lived out in faithfulness, in actions such as calling the marginalized to his side, in obedience to God that seeks to do God's will, not one's own. This way of life is so engrained in Jesus, is so important to who he is and what he does, that he is willing to give his life for this truth.

In a gospel that begins with the time before time, Jesus claims his eternal role as a testimony to the truth. Christ is, was, and always will be not just a king, but "ruler of the kings of earth," to use the title from Revelation.

2 Samuel 23:1–7 This second book of Samuel draws to a close with a song of praise attributed to David. Hannah's song, which we encountered in 1 Samuel, celebrated God's faithfulness at a time of birth. David's words reflect on God's faithfulness near the time of death. David, like Hannah, grounds his hope in God's faithfulness. David's hope rests in the timeless covenant that God keeps, not in any temporal authority, including his own.

Psalm 132:1–12, (13–18) works well as a response to the 2 Samuel text. Its celebration of Zion (the temple mount in Jerusalem), God's "habitation," recalls David's return of the ark to the tribes after it had been taken by the Philistines. Yet the words do not dwell exclusively on remembrances of times past or simply in God's deeds "back then." Rather, they move on to hope in their expectation of an heir who will be set on the throne.

Revelation 1:4b–8 Christ's power, exercised in love and freedom, is contrasted with the oppressive power confronted by the community of this book. Notice, too, the verb tense used in verse 5: [Christ] loves us. Love is not just a past recollection of what had been done on the cross. Nor is love restricted to the promise of hope that will someday be fulfilled. Christ's love is now; it is immediate. And, in that love, covenant has been struck. The crises and the problems that beset us do not define us. God in Christ creates us as a people, in the language of Revelation as a "kingdom" and as "priests."

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The Almighty One – who is, and who was, and who is to come – encircles us in hope before and beyond all time. Thanks be to God! What enduring hope do you celebrate? What enduring truth shapes your daily living? How does your faith community express its hope in God's eternal truth?



Focus scripture

John 18:33–37

Additional scriptures

2 Samuel 23:1–7

**Psalm 132:1–12,
(13–18)**

Revelation 1:4b–8



Seasons of the Spirit is based on semi-continuous readings of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Alpha and Omega, you encircle time with your presence; you encircle creation with your love. You brought all things into being and receive all things back to you. May we find our hope, and our life, in your enfolding grace. Amen.

Lectio Connection links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Young children learn in part by copying behaviour. Older siblings, parents, favourite teachers, and significant coaches are all potential sources of ideas and behaviours to be adopted. Children of this age are very sensitive to whether or not they are really being listened to. They need adults to be dependable, reliable, and consistent, and to speak the truth. The younger children in this age group are still working at determining what is true and what is not. The older children know about truth as opposed to lies and real as opposed to fiction. They are beginning to develop an understanding of the nuances of truth and can often recognize when adults may shape “the truth” to fit the circumstances,

though they may not understand this is sometimes done to protect people from imagined negative consequences.

This week’s session will help children review some of the things they have learned during this past season of stories about what Jesus said and did. What you say and do, as a Christian educator, will also have been a powerful teaching tool for the children in your group. Older children this week will have the opportunity to explore in more depth the story of Jesus’ trial before Pilate. Pray that the children in your group will learn about who Jesus is as they travel together surrounded by God’s wisdom.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, John 18:33–37, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 91).
- ❑ Bring items for worship space in a basket: white cloth, candle, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage, and a set of [paper chain figures](#) (p. 101).
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), matches, candle snuffer, offering basket, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available for purchase at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring a small bell or “singing bowl” and pipe cleaners.
- ❑ Bring “[Gathering song](#)” (p. 100).

Engage

- ❑ Bring copies of this week’s resource sheets “[Listen to My Voice](#)” and “[A King](#)”
- ❑ Bring the set of words from the bottom of the resource sheet “[A King](#).”

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Prayer zone:** newsprint
- ❑ **Puzzle zone:** copies of this week’s resource sheet “[Maze](#)”
- ❑ **Art zone:** art supplies (pastels, water colours, tempera paint, brushes, paint smocks), mural paper
- ❑ **Craft zone:** modelling clay, list of words from this week’s resource sheet “[A King](#)”
- ❑ **Music zone:** song “Children of the Spirit” (pp. 8–9 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #4 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7)

Bless

- ❑ Bring “[Blessing song](#)” (p. 100).



Reign of Christ

Scripture

John 18:33–37

FOCUS To remember what Jesus said about living God’s way of life

Gather

Welcome the children to the last week of the Season after Pentecost. Explain that the cloth in the worship space will be white today, marking this as a special Sunday, sometimes called “Reign of Christ Sunday” or “Christ the King Sunday.”

Call to gather Ring the bell or “singing bowl” as a signal for everyone to gather in the worship space.

Opening ritual Invite three volunteers to place the items from the basket in the worship space as you lead in the litany.

Leader: Welcome to this place
as we learn about living in God’s way
from day to day (*place white cloth on worship table*),
as we light a candle as a symbol of

God’s presence (*place candle on worship table and light it*),
as we hear wise stories from the Bible (*place Bible on worship table*),
as we share our own stories together (*place paper figures on worship table*).

All: All are welcome here.

Pray the following prayer, inviting children to repeat each line after you:

Dear God, we gather here
to hear your message in the Bible,
to hear your message for us today.
Help us to know the truth of your love and care. **Amen.**

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Distribute the pipe cleaners and invite children to form them into circles. Notice that circles have no beginning or end. They can remind us of God’s love and care which never ends. Invite children to offer ideas of ways to show love to family members and friends. Explain that today we are going to remember some of the stories about Jesus, and how he showed God’s wise ways of love and caring.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of John. Recall that during this season we have been reading stories about Jesus’ teachings from the gospel of Mark. On this last week we have a story about Jesus from the gospel of John, a story about Jesus being questioned by Pilate, the Roman governor.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet “[Listen to My Voice](#)” to review the season’s readings and this week’s story based on **John 18:33–37**, inviting children to participate in the discussion and the repetition of the refrain.

■ **Remembering stories you have heard about Jesus, what do you think is true about Jesus?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Game group (for younger children) Children in this group will have an opportunity to learn to play a game that reinforces a review of Jesus teachings. Invite children to play a game of “Follow the Leader,” changing the leader frequently while the others copy the leader’s actions. The leader can choose any action that Jesus did from the season’s stories – praying, singing, holding a child, teaching, helping.

Bible research group (*for older children*) Children in this group will explore the setting for this week's reading. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[A King](#)" and review the information together in the section "On trial." Although Jesus never called himself a king he was accused by some of the Jewish leaders of wanting to be a king. Recall that this Sunday is sometimes called "Christ the King Sunday."

■ **What kind of leader was Jesus?**

Reporting Ring the bell or "singing bowl" as a signal to gather as a whole group again. Invite the game group to demonstrate some of Jesus' actions. Invite the Bible research group to share information about Jesus' leadership.

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

□ **Prayer zone: Acrostic prayer** (*for older children*) Jesus spoke of testifying to the truth. Events, experiences, and ideas can shape our understanding of truth. Invite children to work in pairs or small groups to create acrostic prayers on newsprint or chalk boards, using the letters of the word "truth." They might begin with, "Loving God, keep us open to the Truth." Then have them add five more lines to their prayers, with each line beginning with one of the letters of the word "TRUTH" or including that letter within a phrase. Share the prayers by reading them aloud in the group.



□ **Puzzle zone: Story review** (*for younger children*) In today's story we are encouraged to listen to Jesus' voice. Through Jesus' voice and actions throughout this season, we have learned more about God's world of love. Invite the children to work in pairs and use the resource sheet "[Maze](#)" to remember the stories that they have heard during the season.



□ **Art zone: Mood paintings** (*for younger children*) Invite the children to think of Jesus standing in front of Pilate and being questioned. Wonder together what Jesus might be thinking. Encourage the children to use the art materials to paint or draw a picture which expresses the mood

and feelings of this scene. Then invite them to paint another picture beside this, using colours, lines, and shapes that remind them of Jesus' loving words and actions, and God's wise ways.

□ **Craft zone: Clay symbols** (*for older children*) Jesus' teachings during this season offered advice about many things, such as being able to let go, and being merciful and generous. Look at the words on the resource sheet "[A King](#)" and invite children to choose one of these theme words from the readings and create a clay symbol to remind them of that particular teaching. Create a display of the symbols to share with the rest of the congregation. Children can then take their symbols home as reminders to "listen to Jesus" in their everyday lives.

□ **Music zone: Song of change** Pilate asked Jesus questions to try to find out more about who Jesus was and what he taught. Sometimes the songs that we sing say something about what we believe. Listen to a recording of the song "Children of the Spirit" (#4 on the *Seasons Music CD* or as an .mp3 download). Invite children to say the refrain together as a poem. Share together some ideas of ways in which group members are already acting as "shapers of the future." What else might they do?

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle.

Sing the "[Blessing song](#)" (p. 100).

Pray (*inviting children to repeat each line after you*)

Dear God,
thank you for stories that help us learn
to live in your way of love.
Help us to spread the circle of your love
until it goes around the whole world. Amen.

Blessing Send children out with these words, "Go in peace to love and serve as followers of Jesus."

Reflect

Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Listen to My Voice](#)" to review the stories of the season at home. Thank you for your ministry with this group. Please take time to fill out the evaluation form at the end of this resource (also in the Library on the *Seasons* website).



Listen to My Voice

(based on John 18:33–37)

Inviting all to respond in this review
of Jesus' teaching will
help children
remember.

Jesus went to Jerusalem, teaching, healing, and preaching all along the way about God's love and justice for everyone. Some people were very angry at what Jesus was saying. Jesus was arrested and taken to see Pilate, the ruler of that area. Pilate wanted to find out what Jesus had done or said to make the people so angry so he asked, "Are you the ruler of these people who have brought you to me?"

Jesus answered "I am not the kind of ruler you are used to in this world," said Jesus.

"So are you a ruler or are you not?" said Pilate.

"If you really cared about the truth then you would know what kind of ruler I am. You would understand my words because I came to speak the truth. If you really wanted to know the truth then you would listen to my voice."

So...what did Jesus teach and what did Jesus do?
Let's remember the stories.

Even though the disciples thought they should go away, Jesus told the mothers to bring their children so that he could bless them. **What did Jesus teach about being welcoming?** (*Affirm responses and then speak the refrain together.*)

Refrain: Jesus said, "Listen to my voice."

Jesus encouraged a rich man to make some hard choices about giving some things away and trusting God. **What did Jesus teach about sharing and giving?** (*Affirm responses and then speak the refrain together.*)

Refrain: Jesus said, "Listen to my voice."

Jesus had a chat with James and John about seeing the greatness in everyone. **What can make us great as a group?** (*Affirm responses and then speak the refrain together.*)

Refrain: Jesus said, "Listen to my voice."

Jesus listened to Bartimaeus and helped him to see in new ways. **How can we listen to others and to God?** (*Affirm responses and then speak the refrain together.*)

Refrain: Jesus said, "Listen to my voice."

Jesus talked with a scribe about the most important rule – Love God, love others, love yourself – and helped the disciples learn more about love. **How can we show our love for God, others, and self?** (*Affirm responses and then speak the refrain together.*)

Refrain: Jesus said, "Listen to my voice."

Jesus watched a poor widow give everything that she had. **How can we be more generous?** (*Affirm responses and then speak the refrain together.*)

Refrain: Jesus said, "Listen to my voice."

That's what Jesus taught and that's what Jesus did.
And we can follow Jesus too.



A KING

On Trial

In John 18:33–37 Jesus stands on trial before Pilate. Just how similar to our modern courtroom is this scene?

Q Who is the **judge**?

A Pilate is like the judge. He was appointed by the government to make decisions about criminal cases.

Q Who are the **defendants**?

A Jesus is one of the defendants, which means he is on trial and must convince the judge of his innocence. We don't know much about the other defendant, whose name was Barabbas, except that he was accused of being a revolutionary. This means he would have been one of the people fighting against the Roman rule during that time.

Q Where are the **lawyers** and the **jury**?

A In Jesus' time there were no lawyers as we know them today. And there wasn't a jury, which is a group of citizens who will decide whether the defendant is guilty or innocent. That decision was made by the judge.



Q What about the **courtroom**?

A Trials today take place indoors and sometimes in "closed hearings," which means there are no cameras or visitors are allowed. Jesus' trial took place in the courtyard, not in a courtroom; it was outside and open to the crowds.

Q What were the **charges**?

A Jesus was accused by the religious leaders of claiming to be "King of the Jews" although Jesus never used this title himself. To claim to be a king would be treason in those times since there was only one ruler, the emperor of Rome. People today are still charged with the crime of treason, which means to violate their allegiance to their country. In some places, it carries the death penalty, as it did in the time of Jesus.

Season

review words

WELCOME
GENEROUS
TRUTH

NEW BEGINNINGS
MERCY
LOVE

LET GO
GREAT



MAZE

Jesus' words and actions taught the disciples about God's world of love, and they can teach us too. See if you can follow Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem. As you meet each story along the way match them with the words at the bottom of the page to remember what these stories have taught us about living in God's way.

start here

