

**Do You Know a King When You See One?**

Whom does this describe? A man. A robe. A crown. A scepter. People paying homage. A throne. A procession. Do you know a king when you see one? Do you?

Does this look like a king to you? **Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. <sup>28</sup> They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, <sup>29</sup> and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. <sup>30</sup> They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. <sup>31</sup> After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him (Matthew 27:27-31).**

Do you still know a king when you see one?

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“Hey,” one of the Roman soldiers said to his fellow soldier, “I heard that this guy thinks he’s a king.” “Oh yeah? He doesn’t look like a king,” the fellow soldier replied. “How about we have some fun and give this guy the royal treatment he deserves,” the Roman soldier said. So the whole company of soldiers surrounded Jesus, stripped him, mocked him, spit on him, and struck him on the head again and again.

Imagine how the soldiers laughed at Jesus while they tortured him. Do you still know a king when you see one?

Jesus wasn’t the king most wanted him to be or expected him to be, even for his twelve disciples. But he was the king he needed to be. Out of love for his people, he knew he needed to stand in the place of sinners and receive the punishment of sinners, for sinners. He knew he needed to do this so that we wouldn’t receive the punishment we deserve for our sins. So when you imagine the soldiers’ mockery of Jesus, never forget that he stood there for you, took it all for you, endured it for you.

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That same day, the Romans soldiers placed a robe on Jesus’ back and made him the butt of their jokes. They went all out and put an expensive purple robe on him, which typically only royalty could afford. But to those soldiers, the mockery was worth the cost. If Jesus is king, he might as well dress the part. It was all part of the fun.

Imagine Jesus wearing that robe. Do you still know a king when you see one?

As pricey as that royal purple robe was, it didn't compare to the red blood that stained the robe from the beating Jesus received that day. The blood that stained that robe was purposely, willingly shed to cleanse us from all sin and wash away all guilt, so that **"though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool"** (Isaiah 1:18).

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Again, on that same day, the Roman soldiers placed a crown of thorns on Jesus' head to continue the mockery. A crown in those days symbolized power or victory. But to show how powerless Jesus was and what a loser he was, the soldiers jammed those thorns into his skull. There was no gentleness to their mockery.

Imagine that crown of thorns on Jesus' head. Do you still know a king when you see one?

Little did the soldiers know how fitting a crown would be. Three days later, who would rise in power? Who would claim the victory? Who would wear a crown of glory? Even now can you hear the taunt, **"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"** (1 Corinthians 15:55) Even now, can you hear the chorus in heaven: **"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"** (Revelation 5:12)

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The sick satire of Jesus continued. Roman pride bowed to no one, but on that day the Roman soldiers knelt in front of Jesus. They knelt to despise him. They knelt out of disgust and disdain. They knelt to show how much of a king Jesus wasn't.

Imagine how ridiculous it had to have appeared, Roman soldiers kneeling before a stricken, smitten, and afflicted Jesus. Do you still know a king when you see one?

Dear friends, there's the bearer of your guilt and shame. There's the substitute for your sin. There's your God, in the flesh, standing in your place. Now who's dropping to their knees?

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Later that day, the fun was over, but the suffering wasn't. The Roman soldiers led Jesus to his makeshift throne and nailed him to a cross. Hands spread, feet nailed together, there Jesus hung, rejected by men, left to die like a criminal, forsaken and alone.

Imagine Jesus' crucifixion. Don't look away. See it for what it is. Do you still know a king when you see one?

One person did. While Jesus was being crucified, he heard Jesus say, **“Father, forgive them.”** While he was suffering and dying, he heard Jesus tell the criminal next to him, **“Today you will be with me in paradise.”** And upon taking his last breath, he heard Jesus call out in a loud voice, **“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”** From the cross proceeded such forgiveness, such mercy, such compassion, such truth, that a Roman centurion couldn’t help but acknowledge a king when he saw one. And he exclaimed, **“Surely he was the Son of God.”**

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Even in the midst of a pandemic, even in the midst of continued hate and divide, even in the midst of violence and death, even in the midst of unrest and uncertainty, do you know how people will know a king when they see one? When they see who, by God’s grace and power, lives within your heart; when they see Christ the King rule your life in these days with the same forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and truth that ruled the heart of that centurion.

God grant that people see Christ rule within your heart and in your life during these days. Because when he does, people will know a king when they see one. Amen.