

What's Your Story?
Intro for Carl Marucci
Psalm 46, Luke 23:33-43
November 20, 2022

In Philippians 2:10-11 the Apostle Paul declares that God has exalted Jesus and “gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Today, on Christ the King Sunday we proclaim and celebrate the good news that Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we are reminded that being a Christian, if we claim to be one, is not by definition being a morally good person, or being someone who goes to church regularly, or even being someone who believes in the divinity of Jesus. Being a Christian is being a person who trusts Jesus as the Savior who removes our sin and gives us abundant life, and It also includes acknowledging Jesus as Lord and consenting to his rule and leadership in our lives.

While Jesus is a good King and he rules his kingdom with love, and righteousness, and justice, we see in the Gospels and in our own experience, that our human race has always struggled to trust that his way is the way and in our foolishness, we have resisted him and his way. At a personal level, you may have experienced some of that distrust when you struggled with practicing forgiveness when someone hurt you or practicing humility when you knew you deserved glory of some kind. In the Gospel passage, we see the ultimate consequences of our failure to trust that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He came to show the way, and the response he got was rejection and a death sentence. There is much that can be said about how and why Jesus was crucified, but for today, the one point I want to make is that part of the problem that we as people have and have always had with Jesus is that he fails to meet our expectations. For the first century Jews, he was not the political leader and king that they wanted. For the thief on the cross, he seemed like a phony because a person with any real power could have and would have saved himself. For the world in general, he seems suspect with all his talk about love and equality for all people, and sacrificial service, and peacemaking over violence. Sometimes our expectations can get in our way.

I highlight this point this morning, because in our church we have just experienced a big change with the calling of a new music minister. A few weeks ago, I talked about change, and one of the things that can sometimes challenge us or get in our way as we try to adapt to change is our expectations. We may have expectations that aren't met, or maybe we just don't know what to expect and that uncertainty can be uncomfortable. For the second week of our What's Your Story series, I asked our new music director, Carl, to share some of his story with us because I think it's important for all of us to get to know him better, not just as the person who you see sitting on the organ bench each week, but as a person, and I also thought that hearing from him could be helpful to us as we work through whatever expectations we may have for our music director and music program at Lakewood. In the few weeks that he has been with us, I have had the opportunity to get to know Carl and I have been enriched by his story, his talents, his personality, and his genuine faith, and I am grateful that you all have the opportunity this morning to get to know him better and to hear how God is and has been at work in Carl's life.