Sermon: **Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first to be raised from death and … also the ruler of the kings of the world** (Revelation 1.5a)

King – what does this conjure up in our minds? Crowns, thrones, palaces, expensive furs, pomp, etc? All cultures with kings give them honour, status, power, etc.

Kings today might be limited, controlled and balanced to prevent dictatorship. But in Jesus’ day Emperor Tiberius had supreme rule, hence the worry of Pilate with king-talk (John 18.28-38)

The various religious groups in Judaism had diff expectations of Messiah. Ideally they wanted a return of independent Jewish rule (c160 BCE – 63 BCE, after which Rome had some say).

Zealots – by force, Sadducees – through *status quo* keeping Romans out as much as possible, Pharisees – a religious realm through keeping the Law. How far was JC identified with these groups?

The Sword in the Stone film: The boy Arthur looking for a sword takes one lodged in a stone – and ends up being named king, an idea furthest from his mind; but this made him the right kind of king. Same is true of the David & Samuel story. Jesus too did not want to be a conventional king. Note how John records an attempt to make him king (John 6.13), and Pilate asks him if he is a king (John 18.33). We see this as nonsense in some way…

Yet we persist in the idea – we sing ‘Majesty’, for instance. We like the idea that Jesus is special, to be honoured… We talk, as did Jesus, of the Kingdom of God. The danger is that we fix in our heads the wrong idea of kingship.

TEXT shows Jesus take on kingship:

* **faithful witness** – to God’s love, a love which led to death;
* **the first to be raised from death** – this love is not defeated by anything;
* **the ruler of the kings of the world** – this love is supreme over all other powers.

Amazingly though, love’s nature is one of serving, not being served. That’s what is meant by the term ‘minister’. In Methodism we say “Every member a minister”. It is only when we serve that Jesus’ message is clearly heard. So what is the message heard from us? How do we serve in our community, as a church, as individuals? May God help us be a faithful witness like Jesus.