

**They thought it was hysterical—this Galilean peasant pretending to be a king. It cracked them up. They decided to have some fun at his expense. The soldiers began by taking away his clothes. He had to stand there as they mocked him. Then they found a beautiful scarlet robe and put that around his shoulders. “There. Now he is beginning to look kingly,” they joked with one another. “You know what is missing? He needs a crown!” One of them thinks up a crown for this peasant king from Galilee, a crown to teach him a thing or two about his silly daydreams, a crown of entwining thorns. They smash the crown down upon his head, and the thorns bite and the blood pours. Still he stands there. His response is not what they had hoped for. He is silent to the taunts, the mockery, the jeers.**

**Someone comes up with another missing item—a king needs a scepter. They scrounge around and find a reed, and they make his right hand take it. They step back to admire the finished product: blood running down his face from the thorns piercing his head, his naked body barely covered with the red scarlet robe, and a flimsy reed that flops this way and that in his hand. “Behold, the man who would be king,” they say.**

**Laughing, they fall on their knees. “Oh, Your majesty!” they cry. “Hail! King of the Jews!” Still he looks on in silence, as their mockery turns vicious. He will not play along in their game, so he will pay. They begin to spit on him to show their utter contempt, and because they can. They take his scepter and whip his head with the reed. “Some scepter. Some rule. Some kingdom. You are nothing, and You are about to die, and it will not be easy. Wait and see, King of the Jews.” What these men miss is the depth of his pity for them, for these who wound him with mockery, who try to shame him, and who are preparing to**

torture and murder him. Look into his eyes, though, and you will see it—a depth of pity and a fountain of love that will shake you to your core. It is a human trait—common to all humanity—to love your friends and to seek to do them good. But to love your enemies, to have nothing but compassion for those who taunt you and who want to spill your blood—that is the mark of the heavenly Friend, of Jesus Christ.

*What language shall I borrow  
to thank thee, dearest Friend,  
For this thy dying sorrow, thy  
pity without end? (LSB 450:5)*

Limitless pity—no end to it. The look of pity from the face of the mocked King extends not only to his torturers but also to the entire human race, which is complicit in his death. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” he would say a few hours later (Luke 23:34).

The truth beyond all truths is that Jesus actually is King—the King promised to the Jews. Yes, Jesus is the long-awaited Son of David. But even more, he is the King for the Gentiles and their ruler. He is the one to whom the entire universe belongs. Every one of us—including those who mocked and shamed him—owe their existence only to his will that we exist. A single thought from Jesus could have undone all those who sought his death. A single thought could have destroyed us all.

But in that highest provocation, in that moment when every other story would say it was time for him to strike back in vengeance, all he returns is love, pity, mercy. For that is what fills him. That is who Jesus is. This is how he reigns as King. He rules in love that hate can’t conquer.

Jesus is determined to share everything we have chosen for ourselves. We were destined to sit on thrones of glory and to be robed in majestic garments and to wear crowns on our heads. That's what our God wanted for us, why he created us in the first place. But we threw it all away and embraced another path; our path; a counterfeit crown that slowly kills us. Jesus would not have that be our end. He came to walk that path as King so that through his sufferings all that we lost might be restored to us again.

Jesus is stripped, that you can be clothed in the bright robe of his righteousness. He wears a crown of thorns, that you can wear a crown of royal gold. He is beaten and mocked, that you will be welcomed and treasured. Jesus will overcome all hatred and mockery and remain Love, that a way would be opened for us to return to the kingdom the Father planned for us from the beginning.

Jesus walks that way—that suffering way—in noble fashion. None of the mockery can take away his majesty. This is your King, and he deserves your allegiance. But more than that, here is your dearest Friend, who endured all of this for the love of you. How will you thank him?

*O make me thine forever!*

*and should I fainting be,*

*Lord, let me never, never, outlive  
my love for thee. (LSB 450:5)*