

Christ the King

Proper 29, Year B – John 18:33-37

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson November 25, 2012

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

Okay – poll time, this morning. How many of you know that, in addition to being Thanksgiving, this past Thursday, November 22, was the anniversary of the death of a very famous man? (count) Okay, very good. Now, keep your hands up – or raise them, if the light just dawned – hands up if you knew that November 22, 1963 was the day that John F. Kennedy died. (count) Okay, now keep your hands up there if you *also* knew that November 22, 1963 was *also* the day that C.S. Lewis died. (count) Ah, I thought so. Well, it's to be expected, really. I suppose it's understandable that slain presidents are more memorable than Christian scholars/authors who died quietly at home. But, that's a bit of a pity, really.

I hope you have had the chance at some point in your life to read some of Dr. Lewis's work. I have lately been enjoying again the autobiography of his reawakening to faith in Christ, *Surprised by Joy*, and I might also commend to you the short work, *Mere Christianity*, or the sometimes hilarious, sometimes profound tongue-in-cheek *Screwtape Letters*, or the wonderful word picture of heaven and hell in *The Great Divorce*. My own particular favorite, however, continues to be the series of adventures which C.S. Lewis wrote for *children*, a series chronicalling adventures in a mythical and magical country called Narnia.

Four human children find their way into Narnia, initially through the back of a wardrobe, and find themselves drawn into a struggle for the very existence of Narnia. As the struggle and the story unfold, the children form a very deep, intimate relationship with the giant lion, Aslan, their companion and guide. Over time, they learn to find safety and security in Aslan's presence. Over time, they begin to find truth in his counsel and comfort in his consolation. Over time, they come to find Aslan helpful, and protective, and maybe even a little... useful. Until the day comes when the story comes to its climax, when the battle is fully engaged, when the good they have chosen is confronted with the evil that it may become. And then Aslan the protector, the companion, the friend becomes a towering majestic presence and the children understand in a single moment that Aslan is not, and never was, a *tame* lion, that he is quite obviously the *King* of Narnia.

For many weeks – for a whole year, in fact – we have read scriptures which reflect on the life of Jesus. We have moved from the beauty of his birth, through the darkness of his passion and death, to the glory of Easter – and even beyond, to experience the presence of the *risen* Christ on the mount of Ascension and in the wind and flame of Pentecost. Then since that glorious climax we have spent literally months in the “green” season since Pentecost – what's called “ordinary time” in the Church year. Week after week we have worked out in scriptures what it might mean to live a *Christian* life, learning to know Christ more deeply, more richly. Week after week, in all the parables, and in all the miracle stories, and in all the sermons on all the mounts, we settled into a kind of intimacy and ease in Christ's presence. Week after week we have come to find Jesus helpful, and protective, and maybe even a little... useful in guiding us through the forests and the valleys and the hilltops of our *own* journey. Until we come here to the end of the road, the end of cycle, the end of another year.

And next week we start over. Next week we turn the page. Next week we begin a whole new year of sacred time.

But here between the last green days of one year and the first purple glimpses of the coming of the Messiah, we celebrate Christ the King. We take this in-between moment to remind ourselves of the absolute sovereignty and majesty of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. We remember being aware of it months ago in the wondrous events of Bethlehem. We remember it in the

terrible awe of Calvary. We remember it in the blazing glory of the empty tomb. We remember it from the moments in our *own* lives when the ordinary has suddenly blazed with the *extra*-ordinary, and we have instinctively knelt in the presence of a king. We remember it from having seen Christ's majesty in a fellow pilgrim. We remember it from having heard Christ in the whispered remembrance of scripture, or in a thrilling note of song. We remember it from the moments when Christ has reigned in our hearts, when our hearts have somehow beat faster, when our lips have formed a groping, unutterable prayer. And in those moments, Christ is there as king and we remember that we... are *his* subjects.

Today as we celebrate Christ the King, we are reminded of just such a Christ – our friend, our intimate companion, now suddenly regal and majestic and more powerful than we could ever have imagined. Today we catch glimpses of Christ enthroned in glory. Today we see all heaven bowed before the Alpha and the Omega. Today we are shown Jesus somehow... *regal* even in his degradation, in *command* even in the shadow of his own death. Today in his few words before earthly power, "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the *truth*," we have no choice but to abandon our thoughts of Jesus Christ as just... nice, simply... comforting, merely... personally therapeutic. Today, like the children in Narnia, we are forced to confront the realization that our protector, our companion, our intimate friend is not, nor has he *ever* been, a *tame* lion. We are forced to abandon our efforts to regard Jesus Christ as just some sort of religious symbol to be used as a personal resource, to be trotted out when he need him to make our point and then put back on the shelf when we are through. We are forced to abandon any thought of Jesus Christ as a tradition, forced to leave behind the concept that he is another religious system, forced to discard the notion that he is just a piece of history long past.

And instead, we are invited to experience *real* power. We are invited to experience grace. We are invited to experience the energy and the immediacy and, yes, the *demand* of the real and absolute presence of the King of Creation in your life and mine.

And so we stand here once again at the end of the Church's year. We stand here once again at the close of Christian time. We stand here once again at the crossing of history, the cusp of the story of stories. And so, at least for this one decisive moment, perhaps we might understand that the Christ who we praise and proclaim, is the Sovereign of all time – the King who is, the King who was, and the King who is to come. And so perhaps that will lead us to a new understanding of our own place in creation, a new understanding of *our* part in the story. And so, maybe, just maybe, we will find the courage and the strength and the *will* to climb, in C.S. Lewis's words from the end of the adventure, "further up – and further in" to the Kingdom of God. And so maybe, just maybe, the story begins anew... again... in us.

And so, let it be. Amen.