

Christ the King

Proper 29, Year B – John 18:33-37

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson November 22, 2015

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.

Today we come to the end of the liturgical year. Today is the last Sunday after Pentecost and next week is the First Sunday of Advent. Next week we start over. Of course, the liturgical year is more of a loop than a straight line. Our children up in the Atrium know this well – they are reminded every week with the big liturgical calendar in their Godly Play space, a calendar that is *round* with the weeks laid out like pie pieces around the edge. Like time itself – and space, for that matter, I've read – the Church Year curves 'round on itself until the end and the beginning meet."

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, especially this time through the Lectionary, we have seen how the first Christians followed the path of Christ, in letters from Paul, and from Peter, and from James, and to the Hebrews. Week after week we have come to find Jesus helpful, and protective, and maybe even a little... *useful* in guiding us along of our 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 again. Next week we turn the page. Next week we begin a whole new year of sacred time. But here in *this* moment, here between the last green days of one year and the first purple glimpses of the coming Messiah, we pause... to celebrate Christ *the King*. We take this in-between moment, to remind ourselves of the absolute sovereignty and *majesty* of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Oh, to be sure, we remember being aware of it months ago in the wondrous story of Bethlehem when angels sang, and shepherds adored, and wise men worshipped. We remember it in the terrible awe of Golgotha as even the inscription proclaimed him, however mockingly, as the King he was. We certainly remember it in the blazing glory of the empty tomb, and the women who couldn't help telling their story, and the disciples who ran to Galilee to meet him.

And we remember his majesty 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 in a fellow pilgrim. We remember it from having heard Christ in the whispered remembrance of scripture, or in a thrilling note of a song. We remember it from the moments when Christ has reigned in our hearts, when our hearts have somehow beaten faster, when our lips have formed a groping, unutterable prayer, when Christ is there as king, to *us*, and we remember that we... belong to *his* Kingdom.

And today as we celebrate Christ the King in the in-between-time, we are reminded of just that majesty. Today we are reminded of just such a Christ – our friend, our intimate companion, our journey's guide, now suddenly regal, now somehow majestic, now infinitely more *powerful* than we could ever have imagined. Today we catch glimpses of Christ enthroned in glory as all heaven bows before the One seated upon the throne. Today we are shown Jesus *regal* even in his degradation, in *command* even in the

shadow of his own death, with those precious few words before earthly power, “For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the *truth*.”

Today as we celebrate Christ the King, 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 lay aside 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.

Today as we celebrate Christ as *King*, we have no choice but to abandon our thoughts of Jesus as just... nice, as simply... comforting, as merely... personally therapeutic. Today, we are forced to realize that our personal protector, is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning of everything *and* its end. Today, we confront the reality that our comforting companion, our intimate friend, is *also* the Lord of lords, and King of kings. Today, as we celebrate Christ the King, we come to *know* that the Lion of Judah is not, nor has he *ever* been, a *tame* lion, but “the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth,” the One who was, and the One who is, and the One who is to come.

And so we stand here once again at the end of the Church’s year and at its beginning. We stand here once again at the close of Christian time, and at its dawning. We stand here once again at the crossing of history, the cusp of the story of stories. And 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. Perhaps at least in *this* moment, our vision of the King will lead us to a new understanding of our *own* place in creation, a new understanding of *our* part in the story, as we find the courage, and the strength, and the *will* to climb “further up – and further in” to the Kingdom of God.

You see, we who too often cower or hesitate in the mission to which we have been called, should *never* be afraid, because we are the beloved children of the Most High King. We who too often struggle with our worthiness to carry such a message, should lift up our heads, because the King of *Glory* “loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a *kingdom*,” *his* kingdom. We who are too often timid in sharing the Good News that we have received from the manger and from the cross and from the empty tomb, *must* not hold back, because in this moment, in *this* moment, the story begins anew... again... in *this* moment... in you and me.

“To him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” “So it is to be,” says the One who sits upon the throne. Amen.