

“Your Kingdom Come”

November 22, 2015

Christ the King Sunday

The disciples fled and were hiding. Religious leaders and political leaders were trying to figure out what to do with Jesus. I’m always intrigued by this exchange between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus won’t call himself a king, but rather says that he has come to testify to the truth. Pilate decides that Jesus isn’t too much of a threat, but still, he is crucified. Another man nailed to a cross. Another man accused, tried, convicted, killed. Just another man.

But that’s not who Jesus is. Today is called “Christ the King Sunday.” It marks the end of the Christian year. And though we live our faith every day, as we hear God’s Word to us, how does it fall on our hearts? Do we understand who Jesus is? Do we know that choosing Jesus is a defining moment in our lives? Do we know that he is not just a good guy, not just a person to be like, not just a man who shows us how to love one another, but that he is the Savior of the world?

Maybe when we hear “Jesus Christ is King,” we think of power and glory. And it’s true. Jesus is King over any earthly power. He is glorified with God. His death on the cross offers us salvation.

But there’s another facet to claiming Christ as King. It’s like turning a kaleidoscope and seeing something in a different way. It’s not only his death, but his life and ministry, too. Remember that Jesus, our king, was a refugee who fled from terror. Soon we’ll celebrate his birth, but shortly after, we’re told that Jesus and his family fled to Egypt to get away from Herod and the violence that Herod was planning.

Remember that Jesus always welcomed the one who was outside, alone, unwelcomed, the stranger. He cared for the widow, orphan, foreigner - those who were most vulnerable. This week, Bishop Kiesey who oversees our Michigan area, reminded us of words from our United Methodist Book of Resolutions: “Jesus fully identifies with the sojourner to the point that to welcome the sojourner is to welcome Jesus himself. (Matthew 25:35) Jesus teaches us to show special concern for the poor and oppressed who come to our land seeking survival and peace.”

I was grateful to gather with others for our prayer service on Wednesday night. We shared our prayers - our hearts and our fears about the state of the world - and offered them to God. Friends, our faith in Christ does inform how we approach all that’s going on in the world. We must look at his life and ministry and seek to follow his ways of love and compassion rather than being bound by fear.

Remember that Jesus is humiliated. He becomes weak that we might be strong. He died because we couldn't stand before God for ourselves. We can't overcome sin, death, or evil on our own. It is Jesus who came that we might have victory and new life in him.

His greatness goes far beyond what we can measure with our minds. Jesus doesn't have power and authority like we strive for – being the best, making the most money, or having control. Jesus' power and authority are divine – given by God - and when we accept him as our Lord and King, with God's help, we become more like him.

A Sunday school teacher was asking her students some questions after lessons on God's omnipotence – God's ability to do all things – God's power. She asked, "Is there anything God can't do?" All was silent. Finally, one boy held up his hand.

The teacher, on seeing this, was disappointed that they had missed the point of the lesson. She sighed and asked, "Well, what is it you think God can't do?"

The boy replied, "He can't please everybody."

Whether we consider ourselves young in the Christian faith or more mature, this boy's comment is right on. The expectations that people had for Jesus – that he would be the military power that would save Israel – were not what God intended. Jesus' Kingdom isn't always what we expect. Jesus' Kingdom isn't always what we want to follow. Jesus' Kingdom isn't easy. It isn't safe. But we can be sure that following Jesus brings us hope and salvation.

"Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." This is a prayer offered by us - loving subjects - to a loving King. When we pray, "Your Kingdom come," it's not prayer that calls us to be passive. It's not prayer that calls us to sit around. It's not a prayer that allows us to look around and not respond.

"Your Kingdom come" is a prayer that calls us to participate in God's Kingdom – here and now. With the love and hope that we know in Jesus Christ, we respond. We welcome. We encourage. We heal. We love. We share. We give. We pray. We witness. We rejoice.

And we do it all in the name of the One who came to seek out the lost and save us from death to life. We do it in the name of the One who came to mend what is broken in us and in the world. We do it because we believe in the power of God to overcome even the worst in us that we might show the best of who God made us to be. We do it because we believe that Jesus loves the whole world without any exceptions. We believe in his promise of salvation, and we trust that God can do what seems impossible.

To call Jesus Christ our King is to embrace his call to reach out in love and concern to all people. He's not a King who comes with a "might makes right" attitude, but with

the command to “Love your neighbor.” He cares for the least of these. He comes as a servant and calls us to serve as we follow him.

“Your Kingdom come” is a prayer and call to commitment – a call to active commitment. We shouldn’t pray it unless we mean it – unless we intend to participate in what God is up to. Unless we pray, unless we want to be a part of the Body of Christ, unless we give out of God’s abundance, unless we use our gifts to the glory of God, unless we witness to God’s grace in our lives. Unless we want God to be about transforming us.

Today we receive new members into this congregation. But it’s not just about them and what they say. It’s about all of us. It’s about reaffirming our faith, putting our trust in God’s grace, and promising to serve Jesus as Lord - as King.

Friends, today we end a year and look to a new one. What will we do that we haven’t been doing? How will we love and care more deeply? Jesus Christ is King. And he isn’t a secret to be kept, but a joy and story to be shared with all that we are. Friends, today and every day, Christ is King.

And so we pray together as people of God redeemed by Christ and empowered by God’s Spirit: “As Jesus Christ reigns as King in our hearts, may we rejoice in his peace, glory in his justice, and live in his love.”

Thanks be to God. AMEN!