

November 21, 2021  
Christ the King Sunday

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Minute for Mission                      Session Committee Chairs

\*Call to Worship                              Revelation 22:13

The Lord is a great God who says,

“I am the Alpha and Omega,

**the first and the last,**

**the beginning and the end.”**

\*Hymn 336 We gather Together to Ask the Lord’s Blessing

Prayer of Confession

**Almighty and everlasting God,**

**whose will it is to restore all things**

**to your well-beloved Son, our Lord and King,**

**grant that the people of earth, including ourselves,**

**now divided and enslaved by sin,**

**may be freed and brought together**

**under his gentle and loving rule,**

**who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,**

**One God, now and forever. Amen.**

\*Hymn 698 Take, O Take Me As I Am

Assurance of Forgiveness

The Lord’s mercies never end. They are new every morning and sure as the sunrise.

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. Your sins are forgotten. Be at peace.

Time With Our Young Disciples

Scripture Reading      Matthew 25:31-46

The Morning Message

I have two questions for us to consider today:

1. Do you choose to live in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ...or not?
2. How can you make your choice real?

I confess that this is not an original idea, but one I heard during a recent presbytery meeting. It was also the subject of a blog I enjoy reading.\*

I ask these questions, because, we have come to the end of the liturgical year, the very last Sunday. Advent, preparing for the birth of Christ, begins next week. As we move through the months, we meet Jesus at the mileposts of his life- his birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension. Then comes Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the early believers and the Church was established. Kingdomtide, or Ordinary Time, follows Pentecost and brings us to today. When we get to this Sunday, Christ the King, or Reign of Christ, we are called on to consider the year we've traveled, how we have related to Christ, and how we have exhibited his kingdom on earth.

This year, Christ the King Sunday may mark the end of the church year, but it does not mark the end of our challenges. We are still in the midst of a public health crisis, although there are more resources available to manage it. It is still hard to navigate the variety of professional opinions regarding masks and vaccines, testing, and quarantine. The political climate is still full of angst. And then there's Baby Dog. Sometimes a little frivolity is just what the doctor ordered.

Last year we hoped to reunite with family for the holidays, but, we were warned against traveling. That was disappointing. My husband and I miss our daughters and our grandchildren all the time. They are two states away. We will see some this week and the others over Christmas. We can't wait. It's like filling up at the emotional fuel station. The mother of our son-in-law suffered a life-threatening stroke this year. There is nothing like being in the embrace of your loved ones to reassure each another that, no matter what the circumstances, we are family and love is our creed.

So, here we are. Christ the King Sunday, the feast day that celebrates the fact that, earthly rulers come and go, and even at the height of their power, they only rule over a very small part of the created universe. Their reign is time-sensitive. It will end. But, Jesus' reign is eternal and cosmic in its proportions. His platform doesn't change and there are no maps to tell us who is and who isn't in Jesus' district. We all are.

Jesus' realm is founded on the principals of justice and integrity-where those who live according to the values of the Kingdom will feel at home- and those who do not will find it an alien place. Christ knows us, all of us, no matter our circumstances. And Christ knows that how we live our lives, day in and day out, shows what kind of person we are.

In this text, Jesus identifies people based on their actions, how they live out their days on this earth. Those who do the tasks of Kingdom living-feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned-they were told, that whenever they ministered to a person in need, it was like ministering to Jesus himself. This shouldn't have been earth-shaking news. This is what they had witnessed Jesus himself doing.

Then, turning to the others, Jesus said that when they refused to help a person in need, they were refusing him. This was a surprise, too, but, it shouldn't have been.

Jesus was teaching, or re-teaching-a fundamental rule of kingdom-living: We are the body of Christ. We are united with him- in life, death, and resurrection. What we do, one for another, builds up, enriches, and heals the body. What we fail to do, when we fail to serve as Christ serves, weakens and diminishes the body.

Jesus is a king unlike any ruler of this earth. For which we can truly thank God. Jesus is not an authoritarian, a despot who orders his subjects to be at his beck and call. A tyrant who wields insults and inflicts pain because that's the way he intimidates and controls people. Nor does he abandon his people, with no concern for order, no rule of life.

No. Jesus, is the king who throws open the doors of his dwelling-place and invites us all in. Jesus welcomes us into the fullness of his life. A life that could compel the friends of a paralyzed man to cut a hole in the roof of a house so he can be lowered into Jesus' presence. To follow Jesus is to sign up for a life of spiritual adventure.

So, friends, will you choose kingdom-living in the year ahead? If you live with a sense of community, if you find energy, satisfaction, fulfillment, comfort, peace, in the fellowship of the church, or in the fellowship of the neighborhood, or your family, you will likely find this way of life appealing.

If you are a solitary soul, independent, not a joiner, you might find this way of life un-appealing. I get it. I have strong introversion tendencies. Being alone usually isn't a problem for me, though the isolation of Covid made me sad and I hope it never returns.

I think we know how 2021 ends. What we don't know is what the future holds. But we know who holds the future. I can live with that. So, I invite you to choose Christ's realm and to make that choice real.

*\*Wellspring of the Gospel*

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

*Invitation-Words of Institution-Great Prayer of Thanksgiving and the Lord's Prayer*

**O God, the first and the last, our beginning and our ending, hear our prayers on this Christ the King Sunday. Remind us that our true citizenship is in your kingdom and empower us to seek your love, justice, and mercy in all we do and say. Grant us courage to speak out against any hatred, prejudice, or abuse of power that seeks to harm others. May we work to usher in a fuller image of your kingdom here on earth, where all are treated with respect, where none go without life's basic necessities, and people of all races, religions, and circumstances are welcomed and valued.**

**As we review these last days of the church year, may our good intentions be blessed and may we be granted grace where we failed.**

**We pray for those who are need of healing and wholeness this day, those in our fellowship of faith, and those we name in our hearts. As the pandemic wears on, encourage and strengthen us to persevere. While we may miss coming together with friends and families in this season, comfort us with your presence and remind us that we are all members of the Communion of Saints, past, present, and future.**

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the body and blood of Christ.

By your Spirit unite us with the living Christ and with all who are baptized in his name, that we may be one in ministry in every time and place.

As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.

We pray in Jesus' name and for his sake, saying, **Our Father...Amen.**

*Distribution of the Elements*

The elements will be received by intinction. Those who wish to remain seated will be served.

Prayer After Communion

**Lead us, O God, to conform this world to your kingdom.**

**Help us to live as the Lord requires: to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly in service to you until Christ comes in final victory and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of the eternal realm. Amen.**

Presenting Our Gifts of Tithe and Offering

Prayer of Dedication

**Blessed are you, O God, Maker of all things.**

**Through your goodness you have blessed us with the gifts of ourselves, our time, and our possessions.**

**Use us, and what we have gathered,  
in feeding the world with your love;  
through the One who gave himself for us,  
Jesus Christ, our Savior and lord. Amen.**

\*Hymn 268      Crown Him With Many Crowns

\*Blessing  
Through every season of every year,  
may God's blessing be upon you  
that you may be strengthened to do your part  
in advancing Christ's Kingdom. Amen.

\*Postlude