

Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian church
955 Main Street
Barboursville, West Virginia 25504
November 22, 2020
Christ the King Sunday

Prelude

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.ö

Prayer of the Day

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,
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 We Gather Together to Ask the Lord's Blessing

We gather together, to ask the Lord's blessing.
He chastens and hastens his will to make known;
the wicked oppressing now cease from distressing.
Sing praises to his name, he forgets not his own.

We all do adore thee, thou leader triumphant,
and pray that thou still our defender wilt be.
Let thy congregation escape tribulation;
Thy name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free!

Reading from Scripture

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 Thursday's 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, is our first season. As we move through the months, we meet Jesus at the mileposts of his life. 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. They will continue and that truth hurts. How many of us quietly held onto the hope that, though this year of the pandemic has been disruptive in so many, many ways, we had Thanksgiving and Christmas to look forward to?

I certainly did. My husband and I miss our daughters and our grandchildren all the time. They are in North Carolina. But, we always visit at the holidays. It's like filling up at the emotional fuel station. Memories are made, plans are made to tide us over til the next visit. Our son-in-law lost his grandfather this year. There is nothing like being in the heart of family to heal a wound that deep. But, it may not be possible in this season. We are being warned against traveling.

Here we are. Christ the King Sunday, the feast day that celebrates the fact that, though 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. But, Jesus' reign is eternal and cosmic in its proportions.

It is a reign that 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. How we live is a better measure of our character than what we say.

In this text, Jesus' criteria for separating people is based on their actions, how they live out their days on this earth.

Those that had done 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, they

were doing those things unto 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.

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 calls a little boy to share his lunch, a life that compels a paralyzed man's friends to cut a hole in the roof of a house so he can be lowered into Jesus's presence. A life of spiritual adventure.

So, friends, will you choose kingdom-living in the year ahead? If you live with a sense of mutuality, if you find comfort, peace, fulfillment, in community, 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. But, I urge you to trust Jesus and his associates on this. Eight months of solitude gets old, even to an introvert.

I think we know how 2020 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*

Prayers of the Faithful 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 in 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 will miss coming together with friends and families in this season, comfort us with your presence while we are absent one from the other.

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

Hymn Crown Him With Many Crowns

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne;
hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but his own!
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of Love; behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified;
no angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.

Crown him the Lord of Peace, whose power a scepter sways
From pole to pole, that wars may cease, absorbed in prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end; and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of paradise extend their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of Years, the Potentate of Time;
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail throughout eternity.

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