Reign of Christ Sunday – November 24th, 2024

Introduction to the Day

Even after Israel had experienced the vagaries of kings, the people still longed for a true king to set things right. He would have the king’s title of Anointed One (Messiah); he would be the “one like a human being” (Son of Man) given dominion in Daniel’s vision. Jesus is given these titles, even though he is nothing like an earthly king. His authority comes from the truth to which he bears witness, and those who recognize the truth voluntarily listen to him. We look forward to the day he is given dominion, knowing his victory will be the nonviolent victory of love.

**Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

And also with you.

**Welcome**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,

our refuge,

our delight,

our beginning and our end.

**Amen.**

Let us come in truth before the one who loves us

and has freed us from our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Eternal One, robed in majesty and mercy,

**we confess that sin has taken hold of us**

**and we are complicit in its power.**

**We are disturbed in spirit and our hearts cannot rest.**

**Unbind us and set us free.**

**Lead us aga**

**in to the waters of rebirth,**

**that we may live just and generous lives**

**for the good of your world**

**and the care of our neighbors,**

**following in the servant way of Jesus.**

**Amen.**

These words are trustworthy and true:

Christ bore our sins once, for all, on the cross,

swallowing up death forever.

For his sake, you are ☩ forgiven

and God remembers your sin no more.

Let your heart be glad again,

and rejoice in your salvation.

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn “Prepare the Royal Highway” #264 vss 1-3**

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty and ever-living God, you anointed your beloved Son to be priest and sovereign forever. Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united by the glorious and gentle rule of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

**Reading - Psalm 93 We will read it responsively**

1 The Lord is king, robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength.

  The Lord has made the world so sure that it cannot be moved.

 2 **Ever since the world began, your throne has been established; you are from everlasting.**

 3 The waters have lifted up, O Lord, the waters have lifted up their voice;

  the waters have lifted up their pounding waves.

 4 **Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea,**

**mightier is the Lord who dwells on high.**

 5 Your testimonies are very sure,

  and holiness befits your house, O Lord, forever and forevermore.

The word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel – John 18:33-37**

33 Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?”35 Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” 36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” 37 Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

The Gospel of Our Lord.

Praise to you, O Chri**st.**

**Sermon**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Earlier this week a Pastor colleague in a Facebook group for clergy in their 20s and 30s, posed the following: “I believe that everyone has some sort of hermeneutic when they’re engaging with the Bible. What is your hermeneutic/lens through which you interpret everything else?”

He is stating his belief that the lens through which we look at the whole of the Bible and all that we encounter within is shaped by one particular Biblical story or theme, and that story or theme affects how it is that every other story is heard. And, I think he is right.

There is a saying I heard years ago, that if I’m anything like the men in my family I’m sure I’ve told you before, but I’m going to tell you again, and the saying goes, “scripture is like a river, you never step in the same river twice.” Essentially, much like the water that you step into in a river is long gone in a moments notice, scripture that we hear doesn’t go away in a moments notice, but in a moment’s notice something can happen that may affect how it is that a particular scripture hits so.

So, while I believe that it is true that we each view the whole of the Biblical narrative through a particular story, how those particular stories hit us are continually molded by the events of life that we daily experience…for better or worse.

The colleague mentioned above posed this theory as a poll question, and here were the options that folks could pick from, some of which folks added on their own, and as I read them I want you to think about the lens through which you approach the Biblical narrative: The Good Samaritan, God so loved the world, the Greatest Commandment, the narrow gate, we are fish, Beloved - let us love one another, you know a tree by its fruit coupled with the fruits of the spirit, Law/Gospel, the Prodigal Son, Sermon on the Plain, the Spirit of the Lrod is upon me - today the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing, Theology of the Cross and justification by God’s works, I came that they may have life and have it abundantly, do justice - love kindness - walk humbly with your God, Divine encounter (burning bush/cloud/fire/Jesus/faith/neighbor.

In total there were 89 responses to this poll. Of those responses many of the options received 1-4% of the vote.

* Spirit of the Lord is upon me/Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing received 7%
* Theology of the Cross and justification by God’s works received 8%
* Law/Gospel was 14%
* The Greatest Commandment - love God and neighbor received 47%

I share all of this because the lens through which we view scripture and the whole of the Biblical story greatly impacts how it is that we hear and celebrate and recognize Christ the King or Reign of Christ Sunday. And, how we hear and celebrate and recognize Christ the King or Reign of Christ Sunday greatly impacts how we live out our faith in the world.

In our Gospel text pilate continually tries to get Jesus to say the things that Jesus would need to say to make Pilate’s life and the decision he needs to make much easier, but Jesus doesn’t. He continually turns in back to Pilate. “Are you here on your own or did others send you?” “You say that I am king”...and more. Jesus never gives him a straight answer.

Instead, being the Jesus of the parable of the Good Samaritan, of John 3:16, the Prodigal Son, that preached the Beatitudes, who is God made flesh and came to live among us to suffer and die with and for us, to remind us of the Greatest Commandment - to love God and neighbor, Jesus refuses to cave. He knows the plan. And, he knows what must take place for it to happen. Because that is what Jesus, our King, is about.

But, in doing so he reminds us to hold dear to what we know best. To the truth that we cling to. And, truth, again, is one of those things that is greatly impacted by the lens through which we view the world. I was reminded just over a year ago of one of those truths that we know so well and cling to, but also sometimes struggle with as people of faith.

As I sat amongst other clergy at the funeral for former Bishop Bob Berg, who before he was elected Bishop was my pastor at Chetek Lutheran Church. During the message the preacher, a retired Bishop who served alongside Bishop Berg recounted a conversation that he and Bob had when there was a shift in the language we use in our creedal statements. You might remember that this was a touch contentious, mostly because people don’t like change. But, one of the changes was to shift from “descended to hell” to “descended to the dead.”

The preacher remembered Bob saying, “I really like this change, because it directly names what it is that Christ conquers for us.”

This Reign of Christ Sunday let us remember that. That is our truth. No matter the lens through which we view scripture, we worship a God who took on human flesh to live among God’s people to show them love. To live with them, to suffer with them, to die with them, only to defeat the power of death, to ensure that death would not have the final say. That all would inhabit Christ’s Kingdom that is not of this world. That is Christ the King. That is the reign of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

**Hymn of the Day “Crown Him with Many Crowns” #855 vss 1, 4, 5**

**Apostle’s Creed**

**Prayers**

Rooted in God’s abundant love for the world, let us pray for our neighbors, the church, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

Revive our congregations, synods, and national church body to reflect the love, justice, and kinship of your kingdom. Raise up diverse leaders (*like Justus Falckner, Jehu Jones, and William Passavant, whom we commemorate today*) who teach and serve your people. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Nourish parched lands and bring relief to flooded places. Protect wildlife habitats and endangered species, that the chorus of creation’s praise resounds with joy. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Grant wisdom to the leaders who govern, legislate, and deliberate on our behalf (*local officials may be named*). Advance your nonviolent reign of justice-seeking love through their work. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Draw near to those who are detained, on trial, or incarcerated. Transform systems of retribution into systems of reconciliation and restoration. Empower activists who advocate for change. Lift up those who are sick in mind, body, or spirit. We pray especially for Becky, Dawn, *Grady and Jace, Matt, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee.* Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

Remind us of your enduring love in all seasons. Guide the planning efforts of worship leaders and volunteers who usher our congregation into a meaningful Advent (*worship ministries may be named*). Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

In your eternal presence the saints (*recently deceased members of the congregation may be named*) sing of your majesty. Join our voices with theirs in praise to the one who loves us and frees us from sin. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

(*especially*)

We offer our prayers to you, gracious God, trusting in your boundless love for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

**Peace**

**Offering**

**Offertory Prayer**

Lord Jesus, our portion and our cup,

you offered yourself in love for the world,

and in this meal you nourish us with your life.

Fill us with your abundance,

that we may feed the hungry and welcome the stranger,

trusting in your name.

**Amen.**

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

**Lord’s Prayer**

Behold, God is making all things new!

Take your place in the new creation.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Faithful God,

you have spread before us a feast of rich food and drink

in the body and blood of your Son.

Now send us out to labor with you,

in service to the world you have made,

and among the people you have made your home,

in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**Sending**

Go in peace. Encourage one another in Christ!

**Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.**

And all of Good Shepherd said,

**“AMEN”**

**Sending Hymn “Lift High the Cross” #660 vss 1, 3, 4**

**Blessing**

The Ancient One, enthroned,

the Crucified One, now risen,

the Indwelling One, poured out,

☩ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

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