

“Not the King You’re Looking For”

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November 24, 2024

Christ the King Sunday

The Last Sunday after Pentecost

St. Michael's Episcopal Church

Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God. Amen.

- Twenty-two years ago, I proposed to my girlfriend.
 - She said yes, which explains how I'm married now.
 - I wasn't worried about whether Christina would say yes
 - But I was a little worried that my proposal wouldn't go well
 - There were a lot of moving parts, which shouldn't surprise those of you who know me well.
- Here's the Cliff Notes:
 - It was a Friday night, and I took her to a berry patch where the proprietor was an amateur astronomer, with several big telescopes for stargazing.
 - I made arrangements with him in advance to leave us alone with one of his telescopes
 - In my pocket was an engagement ring, with one larger diamond in the center, and one smaller one on either side of it.
 - So when it was my turn to look in the telescope, I told her I'd spotted an amazing trio of stars, with one big one in the center, and a smaller one on either side of it.
 - She stepped up to look through the eyepiece. "Where is it?"
 - I held the ring next to the right side of her face and said "It's way off to the right."
 - "I don't see it," she said, and stepped down.
 - "Look one more time," I said. So she stepped back up to the eyepiece and this time I put the ring right in front of her face. But it was really dark out.
 - So she said "What are you doing?" and pushed the ring away

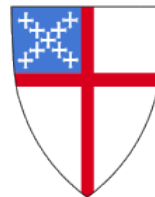
- “No, look.” I said. And showed her again. And that’s when it hit her. I was proposing. We were getting married.
- But that moment stuck with me. “What are you doing?” she said. And she accidentally pushed away the very thing that she had been hoping for.
 - In fairness, it was dark. She just thought I was being weird.
 - She was looking for some star I was talking about. In that moment she wasn’t looking for a ring.
 - Thankfully, this time it worked out.
 - But so often, when we’re looking intently for one thing, we’re not prepared for God to give us something so much better.
- This is what I see happening in the Gospel scene between Jesus and Pilate.
 - Pilate asks Jesus if he’s the “King of the Jews”, and we know he has a pretty specific idea in mind.
 - Pilate is a governor—a politician. He knows what a king is. And he wants to know if this man in front of him is a threat to the empire.
 - Pilate is searching for potential kings so he can eliminate them.
 - Meanwhile, the people of Israel are searching for a king so they can enthrone him. And fight with him, for their freedom from that empire.
- Everyone around Jesus is looking for something specific.
 - And in every case, Jesus deflects.
 - Maybe you remember that scene from the original Star Wars movie...
 - Where the stormtroopers are trying to apprehend R2D2 and C3PO, but Obi Wan Kenobi protects them by using a Jedi mind trick.
 - When the stormtroopers approach their vehicle, Obi Wan waves his hand and says “These aren’t the droids you’re looking for.”
 - They reply “These aren’t the droids we’re looking for.”

- So they walk away, missing the truth that's right there in plain sight.
- It's as if Pilate asks Jesus "are you a king?"
 - And Jesus replies "I am not the king you're looking for."
 - "Yes, I am a king. But not the kind you think."
 - "I am not an authoritarian. I am not a military commander. I am not a narcissist. I am not a power-monger."
 - "Close your eyes and picture a king. Everything you've just imagined... I am not that."
 - And so, Pilate—and virtually everyone else that encountered Jesus—walked away, missing the truth that was right there in plain sight.
- It happens even now.
 - But instead of walking away and forgetting about Jesus...
 - We go off and make our own.
 - If this humble Nazarene is not going to meet our expectations
 - We'll fabricate a king who will
 - And we'll go ahead and name that fabrication Jesus.
- And we'll use that name to get what we want
 - A certain job, a certain partner, a certain cause we want to advance, a certain political office we want to hold
 - Jesus of Nazareth didn't have anything to do with it.
 - He never does.
 - He gave his disciples a chance to understand
 - And he gave Pilate a chance to understand
 - And they all walked away.
- But you know what... Jesus never gave up on them. Or on us.
 - We walked away...
 - But he's still right where we left him

- Waiting for us to let go of our presumptions, let go of our agendas and platforms and artificial standards.
- Waiting for us to come back and say, “Ok...”
- “Remember when you said your kingdom was not of this world?”
- “What did you mean by that?”
- And he’s ready to show us.
 - I think Jesus wants to show us the other side of everything
 - Yes, a King has resources. A King has power. A King has authority.
 - But this King wants to use his resources, not for himself and his friends, but to bless the world
 - This King wants to use his power, not to defeat his enemies or to bend the people to his will, but to cast away the darkness from your life and bring you hope and healing.
 - This King wants to use his authority, but not by himself. He wants to share it with you, and with me.
 - It’s not “power over” it’s “power with”
- This is not the King you’re looking for. It’s something so wonderful we would never have thought to look for it.
 - Forget everything you ever knew about kings and queens and emperors and empresses.
 - Let’s not miss the truth that’s right there in plain sight.
 - Jesus is a different kind of King, and he’s calling us to be a different kind of subject.
 - Not a subject, but a partner.
 - To join with him in blessing the world, in bringing hope and healing
 - And to keep our minds open, our eyes open, and our hearts open
 - So that every day he can bring us something better than we could have ever thought to look for.
 - Amen.

- The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

Last Sunday after Pentecost



Christ the King

Proper 29
Year B
RCL

Track 1

or

Track 2

2 Samuel 23:1-7

Psalm 132:1-13

(14-19)

Revelation 1:4b-8

John 18:33-37

Daniel 7:9-10,

13-14

Psalm 93

Revelation

1:4b-8

John 18:33-37

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament

2 Samuel 23:1-7

These are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:
The spirit of the LORD speaks through me,
his word is upon my tongue.

The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the fear of God,
is like the light of morning,
like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,
gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.
Is not my house like this with God?
For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.
Will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?
But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away;
for they cannot be picked up with the hand;
to touch them one uses an iron bar
or the shaft of a spear.
And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

The Response

Psalm 132:1-13 (14-19)

Memento, Domine

- 1 LORD, remember David, *
and all the hardships he endured;
- 2 How he swore an oath to the LORD *
and vowed a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:
- 3 "I will not come under the roof of my house," *
nor climb up into my bed;
- 4 I will not allow my eyes to sleep, *
nor let my eyelids slumber;
- 5 Until I find a place for the LORD, *
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."
- 6 "The ark! We heard it was in Ephratah; *
we found it in the fields of Jearim.
- 7 Let us go to God's dwelling place; *
let us fall upon our knees before his footstool."
- 8 Arise, O LORD, into your resting-place, *
you and the ark of your strength.
- 9 Let your priests be clothed with righteousness; *
let your faithful people sing with joy.
- 10 For your servant David's sake, *
do not turn away the face of your Anointed.
- 11 The LORD has sworn an oath to David; *
in truth, he will not break it:
- 12 "A son, the fruit of your body *
will I set upon your throne.
- 13 If your children keep my covenant
and my testimonies that I shall teach them, *
their children will sit upon your throne for evermore."

The Epistle

Revelation 1:4b-8

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

The Gospel

John 18:33-37

Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” 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?” 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.” 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.”