

IS CHRIST THE KING?

Lectionary reading -- John 18:33-37

Last Sunday after Pentecost

November 22, 2009

In many churches throughout Christendom, today is observed as “Christ the King Sunday.” Today’s gospel reading from John fits that theme. It is a text that may seem out of context to us, since we connect the reading with the events of Holy Week. Hold the turkey and pumpkin pie. Before we celebrate Thanksgiving on Thursday and move into the First Sunday of Advent next week, we need to get to the heart of “Christ the King Sunday” by backtracking to Holy Week.

Jesus has been brought before Pilate to be interrogated. “Are you the King of the Jews?” Like many times when Jesus is questioned, he replies with a question. He answers, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” Pilate responds with yet another question: “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?”

Now Jesus shares some insights into his life’s work: “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.” Other-worldly. Hold that thought.

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.”

Now come the questions for us: Do we belong to the truth? Do we listen to Jesus’ voice? Are we other-worldly?

If we belong to the truth and listen to Jesus’ voice, we are going to hear him say some things about money—some things that may make us uncomfortable:

- “...to whom much has been given, much will be required.”
- “...as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”
- “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”
- “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
- “You cannot serve God and wealth.”
- “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”
- “‘...your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

If we belong to the truth and listen to Jesus' voice, we are going to be other-worldly. We are going to adopt heaven's values instead of earthly ones. We will live as those whose true home is in heaven. Instead of living with both feet firmly planted in this world (or with one foot in the grave!), we will live with one foot in heaven. Becoming other-worldly means we are going to have to make some changes. We will have to take responsibility for the way we treat the earth, for the way we treat one another and for the way we treat the wealth God has entrusted to our care. Instead of comparing ourselves with those who have more, we will look at those who have less and share with those who have little. Instead of responding to the church's stewardship efforts with a half-hearted response—same as last year, same as the year before that—we will make a true offering of our lives and resources. Instead of treating money as holy, we will approach ministry as holy. God has placed great trust in us. Will our giving show that we trust God?

We who happily receive blessing upon blessing, mercy upon mercy and grace upon grace are often slow to live out the generosity of heart and spirit that is part of our DNA as Christians. If we belong to the truth and listen to Jesus' voice, we will look for ways to give more...and more...and more...

Jesus, are you the King? If Jesus is to be the King of your life and mine, it's time to put our money where our mouths have been. We've made the good confession of faith: we've proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, the son of the living God, and we've proclaimed him Lord and Savior of our lives and of the world. Now it's time to act on that confession and to tithe – to give proportionally in relation to what we have received.

Today, on Christ the King Sunday, I invite you to proclaim Christ your King by pledging him what you hold dearest, in an act of grateful praise.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

Call to Worship

We gather to give thanks to the God who made heaven and earth.

We gather to pray for the healing of the nations.

We gather to offer ourselves to the one to whom we belong.

We gather to worship the gracious and generous God of our salvation.

Prayer of Invocation

God of all mercy, Giver of all gifts, we are grateful for life itself and for friendship, love, faithfulness, and forgiveness. Teach us how to return thanks by lives of service, deeds of hospitality and acts of generosity. May we allow you to rule in our hearts, that we may serve you with joy all our days, in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

Suggested hymns

Now Thank We All Our God (Chalice, 715)

Marching to Zion (Chalice, 707)

We Gather Together (Chalice, 276)

Lead On, O King Eternal (Chalice, 632)

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