

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

“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?”

Our lessons today are filled with images of God as King and Lord.

To say the least,

these are images that are less than encouraged in our day and age.

Much of this kind of language has been excised from our supplemental liturgies,  
you know, those new “experimental” liturgies  
that come out of the great liturgical think tanks of the church.

Some of this is an attempt to tone down

the male dominant language historically used for God,  
and to that end I think it is a noble endeavor,  
but not all of it.

You see, in America we have another problem.

Ever since our revolution we have been without a monarch,  
so we don’t really know what a king is for.

And even more problematic,

we have been taught from a very young age  
that monarchy is really an illegitimate form of government.

“The power of government is rightly derived from the consent of the governed,”  
or however we put it in our declaration.

I have begun to wonder if that might be part of the reason

why people in America have been electing not to go to church of late,  
regardless of the pandemic.

But that really is a much bigger question,  
and one better left for a different day.

And so, here we are on this our celebration of Christ the King Sunday,  
and we have a problem.

We are all gathered here to try and celebrate  
something we probably don't really believe in.

I must say, that does make it kind of hard on the ol' preacher,  
but fear not, I love a challenge.

Now don't get me wrong,  
I'm pretty sure that we all believe in God,  
or we wouldn't be here. Right?

But do we really believe that God is our King,  
with all the negative garbage that goes along with that?

I could take the easy way out  
and say that Christ's kingdom is in heaven  
and so we don't really have to worry  
about accepting a monarchy until after we die,  
and then, to be fair, it's only a problem if we get into heaven,  
because if we go to hell we'll have other far greater things to worry about.

And then, son-of-a-gun,  
if we don't even get some support for this enticing end around  
from our Gospel this morning;

When Jesus says, "My kingdom is not from this world."

But anyone who pays even a little attention on Sunday mornings  
will see the problem with that line of reasoning.

Just two lines from the Lord's Prayer,  
a prayer we Christians repeat at the drop of a hat,

will put paid to that.

Those lines are,

“Thy/your kingdom come,  
thy/your will be done  
on earth as (it is) in heaven.”

We say it enough.

Do we believe it?

Are we really working to make God’s kingdom come here on earth?

Or are we just working to make the earth a better place?

Don’t get me wrong,

making the earth a better place is a laudable goal after all,  
a goal worth striving for...

but it doesn’t really require us to believe in God,

or to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and King,

And it still doesn’t make “thy/your kingdom come....”

Making the earth a better place is a great place to start,

but as Christians we must go further.

We must work for the kingdom of God.

Even we revolutionaries

who have found at least part of our identity  
in the dissolution of our earthly monarchy.

So how do we do this?

In some ways it is easy for us,

easier than for those raised in an earthly kingdom,  
because we don’t have to un-learn the faults of earthly monarchs,  
even the most benevolent.

In other ways it is more difficult.

When Christ the King comes into our lives,

our earthly understanding of monarchy gets turned upside down,

or perhaps inside out might be a better phrase.  
In Christ we find the perfect unity of God and humanity.  
It is a unity that is difficult to comprehend in its entirety,  
and so we often take it in two bites.  
With the earthly Jesus,  
we tend to see God on the inside (or more hidden)  
and humanity on the outside (or more obvious).  
With the risen Christ,  
we tend to see God on the outside  
and humanity on the inside.  
This doesn't reflect any theological reality,  
and it isn't orthodox,  
it's just an easier way  
to try and wrap our minds around  
the full humanity and full divinity of Christ.

Let me repeat:

it's easy, but it's **not** correct.

The truth is, that it is in wrestling with all the contradictions  
that Christ the King brings to light,  
that we are rewarded with glimpses of the real truth.  
In that bound and beaten man standing before Pontius Pilate  
is revealed the brilliant light of truth shining in the darkness.  
Pilate believes he holds the life and death of Jesus in his hands,  
when in reality the death he is afraid to dispense  
will be in truth, new and everlasting life for the whole world.  
The King of heaven and earth  
stands meekly before a mere governor of Palestine  
to receive judgement.

Our King dies for us

even as we refuse to acknowledge his kingship.

And by his death and resurrection

he raises us up out of the mud of our own sins,  
giving to each of us the crown of heaven.

It would be bad enough

if this only happened just that once when he was first crucified,  
but it doesn't.

It happens again and again

whenever we fail to live into the ideal that God has set for us.

There are countless stories throughout history

of children ascending to their earthly throne

before any rational person would assume they were ready.

Henry VI of England

was crowned at the ripe old age of nine months!

Some did OK and some didn't.

And some did quite well with the kingdom they had received, thank you.

And so we now come to the true crux of Christ the King Sunday.

Perhaps the most distressing thing about Christ the King

is that even though his kingdom is not *from* this world,  
it is *to* this world, and all that that implies.

For with Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension,

the monarchy of this world,

his monarchy,

has passed to us.

Each one of us.

We have all been given a crown.

We are his regents until Christ returns to reign.

Like countless kings and queens before us,

we may not think we are ready,

but we have been given the crown none the less.

And we have a kingdom to maintain until the true king returns.

For this reason we were born from above, in our baptism.

and for this reason we go into the world,

to testify to the truth!

As another year in the church calendar comes to a close,

we must take a hard look

at the rich kingdom we have been given stewardship over.

And as I remind you of your responsibilities,

as I do each year at this time,

As the good privy counselor that I am, I have to ask...

How goes the kingdom, your majesty?

Amen.