



Christ the King Readings and Commentary - 11/26/2017

Scripture readings

GATHERING

The emphasis of our worship today is on CHRIST THE KING. Every reading and every hymn was chosen to point to Jesus Christ as the One to be crowned Lord of all. You will notice "royal" words occurring frequently-not just king and kingdom, but words like throne, crown, dominion, authority, rule, reign. The emphasis of our worship today is on CHRIST THE KING.

But not just today. In the next few moments, by means of scripture and song and commentary, we will be moving through an entire Church Year. Throughout the year, in every season we celebrate and in every circumstance in which we find ourselves, JESUS CHRIST IS KING, the Lord who comes to us by God's own sending, to make us members of the Royal Family.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

ADVENT

The surroundings were simple and unassuming-sleepy Nazareth at first, then bustling Bethlehem; later humble Galilee, eventually Mount Calvary. The folks we meet as the story of our salvation begins again each year are simple and unassuming: Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, John the Baptist.

But the message of the season is profound: the One for whom the world prepares is the One for whom the world has waited, the One, the angel said, who will receive the throne, to reign over an eternal kingdom. Even before his birth, the anticipations of Advent proclaim him CHRIST THE KING.

Luke 1 :26-27, 30-33

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have

found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

CHRISTMAS

Christmas calls us to look into the manger, and to see there ... a child. Again, we are dealing with humble beginnings. But again, the Word of God will not let us forget what it is we are beholding here: a whole multitude of the heavenly host accompanies the announcement of "a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Joining the praises of the angels, the Church replies "Glory to the newborn King." A baby? Yes, but so much more: Immanuel, God-with-us whose coming heralds in person God's royal promise of peace.

Isaiah 9:6-7a

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us. Authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

EPIPHANY

"Our heavenly King." The beginnings may have been humble-Nazareth and Bethlehem, Advent and Christmas-but the season of Epiphany continues to unfold the grand scale on which the story of our salvation is told. "The King of the Jews" is sought out by Gentiles following a star; he is proclaimed at his baptism God's own beloved Son, revealed then in word and deed as the One who wields "all authority in heaven and on earth," CHRIST THE KING, the ruler of everything everywhere-here, among us, aware of our needs, concerned for our welfare, exercising his royal power with divine and saving love.

Matthew 2: 1-2

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

LENT

And so he dies, but dies a King. His crown may be thorns, his throne a tree, his scepter and footstool nails-but he dies a King, with royal gifts to bestow on all who hear his voice. His death bears witness to the truth, the truth that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son"-the Son proclaimed during Epiphany tide as God's Beloved, with whom God was well pleased. Why then did he die? To bear witness to the truth-the one thing that will remain true for each of us even when nothing else matters, when the closing grave will have rendered everything else irrelevant-the truth that "whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

John 18:33-37

Then 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."

EASTER

Yes, he suffered. And yes, he died. And yes, he rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven, where he reigns as **CHRIST THE KING**. With cascading Alleluias the season of Easter proclaims that the sufferings of Lent really worked, that the blood of Jesus Christ (who came among us flesh-and-blood at Christmas), God's Son (revealed throughout Epiphany as God's beloved Son), truly does reconcile us to God and one another.

Corinthians 15:20-25

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being. For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at this coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Ephesians 1:20-23

God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

PENTECOST

At Pentecost the story comes full circle. With the sending of the Holy Spirit, **CHRIST THE KING** anoints us members of the Royal Family, ambassadors of the Crown, engaged in the King's business. With the coming of the Holy Spirit we "know" God and God's creation in a different way. We are equipped and empowered for mission. We worship God in Christ through the Spirit for new life on Earth.

Acts 5:27c-32

The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right and as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

The long green season of Sundays after Pentecost may well represent time, the time we have been given to serve and represent our King. Week by week throughout the Church Year we spend at least a portion of our time here in the house of God, engaged in prayer for all in need and in giving of our means even as we give daily of ourselves, and being inspired and equipped for royal service until our Savior who once came to make us members of the Royal Family comes again, this time in reigning glory, the final Advent of our King.

Matthew 25:31-40

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"