

Reflection for Sunday, November 21, 2021

### **What King Is This?**

*We place our hope in God. We sing of a life beyond life and a future good beyond imagining; a new heaven and a new earth, the end of sorrow, pain, and tears, Christ's return and life with God, the making new of all things. We yearn for the coming of that future, even while participating in eternal life now.*

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

Let us pray:

*Mighty and tender God, voice of the voiceless, power of the powerless: we praise you for your vision of a community of wholeness, a realm of peace, in which all who hunger and thirst are nourished, in which the stranger is welcomed, the hurting are healed, and the captive set free. Guide us by your truth and love, until we and all your people make manifest your reign of justice and compassion. We pray in the name of your anointed One, our servant-king, to whom with you and the Spirit, one Holy God, be honour, glory and blessing this day and forever. Amen.*

This Sunday is known as Christ the King or Reign of Christ Sunday, the day in the liturgical year when the Alpha finally reaches the Omega. It is the last Sunday of the Christian year, as next Sunday begins Advent, the start of a new year; the day that the church affirms the universal and eternal rule and reign of Christ as Lord and King of all creation.

We live in the tension between the Christ who is to come again and the Christ who is already here. It is our task, therefore, to live in both expectation and responsibility. To live in the hope of God's kingdom through Christ, and to live in the present reality of seeking and doing

the work of Christ in our day and time. We live with eyes fixed on the future and hands active in the present.

But what kind of a king? Too often we, like Pilate, close ourselves off to the whole truth, because it is unpleasant or simply unwanted. “We do not want complex answers. We want simple answers that bring less stress and less reflection, ignoring the reality of nuance and inconsistency common to human existence. We want the truth that convinces us, not the truth that convicts us; the truth that affirms us, not the truth that challenges us. We want a truth in our own image, not in the image of God.” (Thomas B. Slater).

Christ challenges us to look for destiny and truth from unusual persons in unusual places and to accept them even when acceptance makes us uncomfortable and challenges our assumptions. He calls us to remember that destiny and truth did not reside with Pilate and Rome but with a carpenter from Nazareth.

When we have seen Jesus on the cross, we know how to recognize him in other places. Where people suffer and die, there we see Jesus. Where people are left alone, and the people they have loved and trusted are gone away, there we see him. When people are left on the fringes by the prejudices of those who think they are at the centre, there we see him. Where people bear the brunt of evil they did not create, there we see him. Where people who stand for justice and truth are laughed at for their convictions, there we see him. Where our blindness hides the truth; where our sin causes suffering; where our indifference allows evil to flourish, there too we see him.

“As Christians enter into Advent and prepare to celebrate the coming of the Christ Child, we need to make sure that we’re telling the whole story. Will we be people who only look for the pretty parts of the story, or will we be people who look at both the joy and the pain to search for

God's presence? Will we be people who only see ourselves in the sympathetic characters, or will we recognize ourselves in the villains as well? Will we simply be observers of Jesus' story, or will we be people whose lives are lived as part of the story?" (Richard Bott).

As Brian Erikson exclaims: "Today we proclaim to the world that Christ is our king. He is our king when hope seems lost, that voice we listen to when promises seem shattered, when our lives have no direction, and when we can't imagine anything tomorrow could bring that might fill this hole within us. This is the great now-and-not-yet of Christian life, that we celebrate a victory the world cannot see, a hope that defies every instinct, a king enthroned on a cross. Therefore we need not be afraid of any power this world can wrangle, for Christ gets the last word."

*Bill Cantelon*