

Pastor Jon's Sermon from November 20/21, 2021 Christ the King

Welcome to Christ the King Sunday. This is always the last day in the church year. It typically comes on the opening weekend of Deer Gun Season in Wisconsin. And the lessons are typically apocalyptic in nature.

Next weekend we will begin The Season of Advent in church and the countdown to Christmas. I always found the lighting of the Advent Wreath in church a hopeful image. Light is breaking into the world to dispel all darkness. Plus as a kid, every candle lit in church meant it was one day closer to opening Christmas presents.

All of the lessons assigned to today lift up Jesus as a King. This is an antiquated image for most of us today, as we don't have kings or queens in our country, unless you consider Beyonce or LeBron James. Queen Bee and King James.

Our Revelation text calls Jesus the King of all the rulers of the earth. all means all. That means Jesus is king above all earthly rulers, all governments, all human leaders. I find this idea to be very comforting these days when we are experiencing gridlock and bickering in our own country and even families. We have division over the not guilty verdict in the Kyle Rittenhouse trial. The fact that Christ reigns supreme over all human precepts gives me hope... and yet, we know sin and evil still permeate our world and all our human institutions.

In our Gospel from John, you see that Jesus was a reluctant king. And his kingdom was anything but typical. When Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus dodged the question at first. But when pressed, Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." My kingdom is not of this world. This is the good news to me. "So you are a king?" Pilate asked. "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."

Jesus sees the hallmark of his reign as king is to testify to the truth about God and God's dream for the world. Wait a minute. You mean there is only one truth... not multiple truths like we hear every day in the media or coming out of people's mouths. I find Jesus words challenging and comforting here. There is only one truth. I think we humans get confused and place our trust in other truths. Jesus says here that if you want to know the truth, you need to listen to my voice.

I have never seen this before in this way. This simplifies my life... our lives... The truth of Jesus can set us free.

You see, Jesus' reign on earth started in a manger. It was a humble beginning. Jesus came into a world dominated by the Roman Government and a ruler who abused the throne. Caesar ruled with fear and military might. The people had to submit to his unjust policies.

Jesus' reign, that started in a manger, is breaking in even as we speak. We are living in the already but not yet. We look forward to Jesus' return when his reign of love and justice will be fulfilled. But for now, we as Christians are to be a witness to the truth of Jesus' Kingdom in our everyday life. We are to learn the truth that Jesus taught and to build our lives and families and churches around that truth.

What does Jesus' kingdom look like? Have you seen it breaking in lately? On my way to church I saw a sign in someone's yard that spoke to me. It said "Free Leaves". When you give someone in need food or drink that is the kingdom of God. When you see someone speaking on behalf of those who don't have a voice... that is the kingdom of God. When a Good Samaritan helps a stranded person on the side of the road... that is the Kingdom of God.

If you really want to learn about the Kingdom of God to look to the four Gospels to see how God in human flesh treated people... and what he taught in his parables about the kingdom. How he handled injustices? How he used his power? Philippians 2 lifts up the example of Christ and his Kingdom "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than

yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death —
even death on a cross.