

Christ The King

In our liturgical calendar, today is the culmination of the church year. In the church year we start next with the Season of Advent, which is a semi penitential season intended to prepare us for the joyous Season of Christmas. Christmas Season lasts for 12 days, ending on the Eve of Epiphany. The Season of Epiphany takes us all the way to Ash Wednesday and Lent. Lent is a more penitential season to prepare us for the experience of living vicariously through Holy Week, and then celebrating with even more Joy the Day of Resurrection and the Season of Easter which lasts 50 days. Easter Season ends on Pentecost, followed by Trinity Sunday and finally

the long Season after Pentecost. Today is known as Last Pentecost as well as Christ the King.

We have a 3 year Sunday Lectionary, and today we finish Year A. Year A has used Gospel readings from Matthew. Year B will feature readings from Mark and John. Year C features gospel readings from Luke.

Each of the seasons mentioned has at least one theme. Advent's themes are preparation, and expectation of the Redeemer to come. Christmas marks the Incarnation— God becoming man and dwelling among us. Epiphany and the season of Epiphany mark the announcement of the light of Christ for all nations. Ash Wednesday calls us to repentance for the sins which beset us, and Lent is a

season marked by prayer, fasting and self-denial. In the glorious Season of Easter we do not kneel for confession as a sign that we have been given new life in the risen Christ. The Feast Day of Ascension follows Easter Sunday by 40 days, and the Easter Season ends with the Eve of Pentecost. Pentecost marks the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church. In the Season after Pentecost the theme is the life of the church. Today crowns the Season after Pentecost with the acknowledgement that Christ is King over all. He is King over all secular governments, rulers and human institutions. As King, he demands and deserves our complete loyalty and our allegiance above all else.

Christ as King over us simply means that all our other loves—self, spouse, career, possessions and desires are subject to and subordinate to our fealty to him. It is as simple and as difficult as that. The most important gift that God the Creator has endowed us with—Free Will—has also the potential to thwart our giving ultimate allegiance to Christ as our King. We can CHOOSE to not love God or not pursue the ultimate good. That is the blessing and the curse of being human.

For the devout Christian, to pursue and love Christ as our King actually brings us true freedom—freedom to love our Lord and others unconditionally. Today's Collect helps us understand how this can happen. We pray "Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved

by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule.”

Christ the Redeemer comes to free us from our bondage to sin and to our corporate brokenness. All our lives as Christians, we find ourselves making choices to either say YES to his love for us, or to turn away. I believe that in his gracious love for all of us, he is always willing to forgive and to accept us into his “most gracious rule.”

I am reminded of the reading from Mark 10 where Jesus admonishes his disciples and others that we must be like a child to receive the Kingdom of God. Let’s speculate on which characteristics of being a child are those that Jesus is encouraging. Surely, if we observe a pair of 3

year olds fighting over toys: Mine, no mine, and crying over not getting what they want is NOT what Jesus is advocating. That selfishness of wanting to be the center of everything is exactly what we hope to teach our children to outgrow. Some full grown adults still exhibit that kind of behavior. I'm thinking of Big Pharma execs who price crucial medicines ridiculously high just so that they can line their pockets.

In the Kingdom of God, all come to King Jesus with humility and caring for others. And those blessed ones exercise their gift of Free Will to choose humility and caring for others. Another aspect of childhood that Jesus values is trust. A child trusts their parents absolutely (in most cases) and that kind of simple trust is what leads to

the Faith that mature Christians rely on to navigate the ups and downs of adult life.

Today's reading from Colossians tells us "He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption."

In our Eucharistic Prayer A, we repeat the phrase every Sunday: "Christ Has Died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come Again." We believe that our King will return to claim his Kingdom, and we will be his loyal subjects.

We don't talk a lot about the Second Coming—largely because end times talk has been hijacked by crazy apocalyptic theories that are not really biblical—like The

Rapture. We don't know what the end of time will be like, what the new Jerusalem coming down to join heaven and earth will be like. All we have is poetic imagery to paint a picture what it will be like when the King comes back.

The 25th chapter of Matthew gives us a graphic picture of the separating of the sheep and the goats at the end of time, and that chapter makes it perfectly clear that those who will inherit the kingdom are those who gave food, drink and clothing to those in need and to those who visited prisoners; and those who did not offer love in these basic ways to those in need will be accursed and banished from the presence of the King. In other words, we are to live as if Chris is our King NOW and all our days. We may sin and fail, but as long as we love God, love our

neighbor and do our part to change the world, we will remain as subjects of Christ our King.

AMEN