

John 18:33-37
Last Sunday after Pentecost
Christ the King
St Mark – November 21, 2021
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Christ the King!

I feel a sense of excitement when we reach the last Sunday after Pentecost. Christ the King! The triumph of Jesus is finally our focus.

In the long weeks after Pentecost we read about Jesus teaching his disciples, shaping and preparing his apostles, and I believe, discovering (or maybe it's more like remembering) the full meaning and purpose of his earthly life.

We have talked of Jesus as The Christ. The Christ, the chosen one. The Messiah who will be brutally and unjustly treated before being murdered.

Yes, we do read that following that horrific time that the grave will not hold him and that his glory awaits, but our focus during the long weeks after Pentecost has been on what happens before his glory is revealed.

Now, finally, on this the last Sunday of our liturgical year we are putting all the horror to rest as we turn the mocking words of Pilate into our joyous declaration. Behold! Christ the King!

We have been reminded in recent weeks that our life on earth will end. That it is leading us to another life. It is death that brings us life eternal where we will live in the way God originally intended, in His light and love for all eternity.

As we end this liturgical year we look toward a new year filled with hope. Next week we begin the season of Advent. The time of anxious, anxious in a good way, waiting.

Before we know it Jesus, the only child that is of God, not only belonging to God, will be born. Our new year will unfold before us.

In our reading this morning some might see Jesus as a victim held against his will, accused and mocked. But look again, look again at the power Jesus holds as we read this story.

He knows what he is doing. He has chosen to live into this frightful course, this course that is the will of God, His will. His confidence and power are evident. Listen to his words,

“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.”

This is not a broken Christ, but the confident and powerful King from a world unknown to those who hold him captive in this reading. Christ the King of a world unknown to us until we are born into its glory; born from the death we all look toward in the life we live today.

Our Christ has taken back the power he embodied when he made the decision to come down from heaven, to be born as a helpless infant, to grow and mature into a man.

Our Christ has known loss. He has known pain and he knows what will happen in the hours ahead.

Our Christ knows that he will sit at the right hand of the Father in a very short time. Home again, having experienced the creation as one of the creatures even as he also shared the same nature as the Father; fully human and fully divine.

While Jesus exerts his power, as he moves ever closer to the glory of his resurrection, another test is taking place. Peter is around the charcoal fire and his answer to those who question him shows his weakness. Peter's human failings are not unlike our own. He is fearful and unsure, but unlike all of us here this morning Peter has not yet learned who Jesus really is. Peter has not yet experienced his friend Jesus as Christ the King.

Pilate, as governor of the Roman province of Judea, is greatly concerned that Jesus might have actually claimed to be a king of this world. To make such a claim was treason against Rome and punishable by death. Pilate must have expected an outright denial by Jesus. After all, who would willingly admit to treason against Rome?

Jesus doesn't answer him, instead he poses His own question, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” His question lets Pilate know that Jesus understands the political implications at hand. Either Pilate really thinks that Jesus is threatening Rome or Jewish leaders are using Pilate to eliminate Jesus and the threat he is to the power those same leaders hold. Jesus confirms for Pilate that he is a king when he tells Pilate that his kingdom is not of this world and in the same statement he assures Pilate that he is no threat to Rome.

This morning we are hearing of the beginning of the end for Jesus' life as a fully human man on earth. Next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent, the first Sunday of our liturgical year when we begin our march toward the birth of Jesus in his life on earth.

But, today we end our year. As we look back on the year we bring to a close we remember times of joy and times of great sadness.

As Jesus ended his time on earth there were tears and suffering for those who loved him. They didn't know what Jesus knew. They didn't realize that next came glory, that they would see the Risen Lord. They hadn't yet envisioned Christ the King and all the hope that would come with him.

This reading ends with Jesus saying, "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."

Much like what we have read in the 10th chapter of John's gospel when we hear Jesus tell us that when the Good Shepherd calls his flock the sheep know his voice and trust in him. We are told here that we are to listen to his voice if we are to belong to him.

For we have also read that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

In a verse not included in this morning's reading, Pilate asks Jesus, "What is truth." Jesus, Pilate, Jesus! If he had only listened. In the days to come Pilate would have that answer revealed to him.

As we end this year and we remember the loss of those we love let us also remember the great joy that is finally theirs. They have moved beyond the Shadowland, the Shadowland that holds all of us. They have moved into the full Glory of God.

As we end this year we remember those who struggle, the list of human hardship is endless. But as we remember and hold all those we love in prayer, let us also remember Christ The King.

Let us hold fast to his promise of preparing a place for us in his Father's house, hold fast to his promise to be with us always, hold fast to lessons he taught and teaches us as we make our way through our time on earth.

Jesus is the Christ. Christ the King!

Let us go forth in the name of Christ. Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thanks Be To God, Alleluia, Alleluia!