



Last Sunday after Pentecost – Christ the King
 St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene Kristin Keyes

2 Samuel 23:1-7 Psalm 132:1-13 Revelation 1: 4b – 8 John 18:33-37

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

It is Christ the King Sunday, where we celebrate Christ's messianic kingship and sovereign rule over all creation. This Sunday marks the end of the church year, with bold statements to Christ's dominion and authority over every aspect of our lives and creation and affirms our allegiance with Christ as our spiritual ruler, with power to judge and redeem.

As Dean Heather pointed out last week, these last few Sundays of our church year focus on apocalyptic scriptures pointing to the second coming of Christ, before we turn to Advent where we anticipate the incarnation of our Lord.

I appreciate the writings of Franciscan priest, Fr. Richard Rohr in his explanations of the Cosmic Christ, the eternal Christ, the perfect co-inherence of matter and Spirit with us since the beginning of time; and Jesus, the human incarnation of that same mystery birthed on earth a mere 2,000 years ago. Jesus, presenting himself as the "Anointed" or "Christened One" who was human and divine united in one human body—as our model and exemplar. (1)

These two aspects of Jesus and Christ, help me to see, only dimly, this great mystery that is God.

In our scriptures from Revelation, we are worshiping Jesus, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings – He is coming with the clouds, and all will see him and on his account all will wail. And God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Our gospel takes us to the interaction between Pilate and Jesus just before Jesus is sentence to be crucified. Here Pilate interrogates Jesus, asking him if he is a King. After Pilate's mocking repartee, Jesus says that his kingdom is not from this world. Pilate's response is not to ask where this kingdom is located but seems to be more concerned that Jesus is saying he is a king. Perhaps Jesus saying his kingdom is otherworldly removes any threat to Rome or Judea, so Pilate "plays along," so to speak, asking, "So, you are a king?" Jesus responds, "You say I am a King. For this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

What does it mean to be a King for Jesus? And what does that mean to us who desire to hear his voice? The values of Jesus' kingdom are vastly different than what the current system of his day was. He did not have to be on top. He is not oppressive or corrupt, which is what the Romans were to the peoples they subjugated.

These values of Jesus' kingdom are unfolded to us throughout the Gospels. We read Jesus being called the Son of God, The King of Israel, The Messiah, and throughout the Gospels we are shown just what

kind of King Jesus is – not one who comes triumphantly on a horse, but on a donkey; not one who is served, but one who serves, one who speaks to the lowly and the rejected. Not a king many of us would ever recognize. And not the Messiah coming to overthrow the Romans, as many in Jesus' time had hoped.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus offers powerful description of how we are to live in love. The Feast of Christ the King offers us the opportunity to look at our values and how we operate in society. Are we following Jesus, our servant king? Are we living our lives in service as Jesus showed us over and over? Do we have the faith to believe that when we live in love, we can change the world? We may not see the results of our acts of kindness and love, but we can rest in our faith that when we act in love, Jesus is working through us in ways we may never know.

This past year, we've been spending a lot of time and effort to learn more about our congregation and how our church leadership can help us in our relationship with God, to be the disciples Jesus asks us to be.

In our Spiritual Life Inventory from this summer, we learned there are clear desires expressed for growing more in prayer life and reading of scripture, a closer life with God overall, ease in speaking about our faith more freely, and ways to affirm God's presence in all creation and all people.

How do we grow in our relationship with God? Through prayer and worship, through learning and study, through our actions and through our life in community both in our congregation and in our towns. And this is the work we are doing through our Building Bridges: Healing Divides initiative we have undertaken, offered to us by our diocese.

The goal is to help each and every one of us find ways to connect more deeply with God, so we can be equipped to be a source of transformation in our world around us. If you recall from various articles on our Spiritual Life Inventory, it provided an assessment of where we are as a congregation on our spiritual life journey. We found that about 65% of us are either exploring or growing a life with God. Both segments include folks who have lots of questions, and who are looking for guidance and direction to deepen their walk with God. The other 35% are deepening or centered in their life with God. These folks are still looking for ways to continue to deepen their relationship with God but are more comfortable in their explorations without a lot of guidance, but still in community.

These findings led the Building Bridges: Healing Divides team to explore how we might provide guidance in building and growing a deeper relationship with God. Our goal is to entice each of us into trying one small thing to expand our spiritual practices which will hopefully provide an impetus to help us fall into a deeper relationship with God.

Let me share my experience doing just this:

As I was working with the team on the inventory and then analyzing the results, I started thinking how I might try adding that one small thing in my own spiritual practices. God works in amazing ways when a kernel of desire is offered. My sister came home from a shopping trip to Staples and gave me a small gift of something she had found at the store – a Daily Prayer Journal with 365 bible verses – one a day – to inspire my prayer. At the same time, we started inserting our weekly prayers in the bulletin. A confluence of opportunity!

Now, I bring the prayer sheet home with me each week and have added a five-minute prayer journal practice to most of my mornings – offering a few written prayers with a bible verse reading. Doing this at the start of my day has helped me to remember and rely on God more deeply throughout the rest of my day. It is a deeply enriching practice for me with very little extra time involved.

This fall we've added new offers designed to entice us into exploring spiritual practices to help us deepen our relationship with God. These include exploring the Bible, using, *The Path* to help us walk through our rich scriptures, and a monthly exploration and practice of different types of prayer.

Our congregation also has so many offerings – book study groups, prayer groups, spiritual discussion groups, outreach ministries, and community events, dinners and gatherings. Perhaps one of these may be just the option for you to explore.

And, this Sunday, we are doing our first congregational offering to learn about deep listening. After church today, we invite you to join us in exploring an offer from the Episcopal Church called *From Many, One, Conversations Across Difference*. This proposes a way to have conversations that open space with each other and to hear and share stories of our lives and why things are important to us. We will engage in the spiritual practice of deep listening and honest conversation across our many similarities and differences.

We hope that by offering space to do this within our community – a place where we generally all get along – that we can learn how to take these intentional conversations into our community. As former presiding Bishop Michael Curry says, “Conversation with others across difference is not just a nice thing to do. It is a spiritual practice of love in action.”

Some members of our congregation have already been practicing these conversations, and Lyndi Phifer offered these thoughts: “When I was engaged, it was a wonderful way to hear the heart of the other and to get to know them better, learn things that years of normal interactions had not opened up.”

When we do this, we are truly sharing treasure!

So, consider this your invitation – Fall into that deeper relationship with God, so we can be transformed to take His love with us out into our community. The Bishop of Minnesota, Craig Loya offered these thoughts: “As we celebrate Christ the King, proclaim Jesus as king loudly, boldly, without apology or fear, and may we tether our lives to God’s reign of love and justice, until it is gloriously and finally done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

1. Adapted from [*Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*](#), pp. 209-210