

"Kingdom of a Different Kind"  
B, Christ the King; John 18:33-37

November 25, 2018; 10:00 am  
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO  
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WHAT KIND OF KINGDOM HAS JESUS?

What kind of a Kingdom has Jesus?  
No castle nor palace has he.  
No congress nor parliament sitting,  
deciding what laws there will be.

Perhaps he has need of but two laws:  
Love God and your neighbor as well.  
To obey them is all that is needed,  
as all of the saintly can tell.

He has neither army nor navy,  
no air force to guard the frontiers  
to keep out the strangers unwanted  
and maintain the enemy's fears.

Immigration he seems to encourage,  
of some quite disreputable,  
like fishermen, publicans, sinners.  
To such he is hospitable.

It seems there's no revenue service  
or taxes we must calculate.  
He surely cannot run a kingdom  
on what we put into the plate!  
No 1040 form comes in April  
to fill out before the fifteenth,  
with penalties charged for nonpayment,  
beginning upon the sixteenth.

No currency's here with his picture,  
no coinage engraved with his name.

And where are the posters and slogans  
proclaiming his power and fame?

And I see no trappings of kingship,  
no robes made of velvet and fur,  
no crown made of gold set with diamonds,  
to befit our supreme arbiter.

Jesus said that his kingdom was really  
not what Pilate had thought it had been.  
It was not of this world. Of that we are sure.  
And its glory was not what was seen.

For those of us here in his kingdom,  
there is one other thing we have known:  
of the kingdoms around in his lifetime,  
it's the only one left with a throne.

(Andrew Daughters, *The Kingdom of Jesus*, CSS Publishing.)

**John 18:33-37**

<sup>33</sup> Pilate went back into the palace and called for Jesus. He said, "Are you the 'King of the Jews'?"

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you this about me?"

<sup>35</sup> Pilate said, "Do I look like a Jew? Your people and your high priests turned you over to me. What did you do?"

<sup>36</sup> "My kingdom," said Jesus, "doesn't consist of what you see around you. If it did, my followers would fight so that I

wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But I'm not that kind of king, not the world's kind of king."

<sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said, "So, are you a king or not?"

Jesus answered, "You tell me. Because I am King, I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice."

### **I. CHRIST THE WHO?**

Christ the King Sunday. Or, more recently, a more egalitarian name for this last Sunday in the Church Year before Advent starts: "Reign of Christ." Deemed by the Pope about a hundred years ago to be a festival in the church year, right as we end the church year and turn the corner into Advent.

But, Houston, we've got a problem! Right off the bat! For we are democratic folks who have spent hundreds of years *resisting* being ruled by a king. And Jesus says himself: "I'm not the kind of king you're thinking of!"

<sup>36</sup> "My kingdom," said Jesus, "doesn't consist of what you see around you.

We modern-day Protestants squirm a little with this notion of "Christ the King Sunday" and "Christ as ruler over all, coming in power and might" like the Left Behind series. And, I'd venture to say Jesus squirms a little *with* us!

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deciding what laws there will be.

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To obey them is all that is needed,  
as all of the saintly can tell.

### **II. WHERE WOULD JESUS LEAD?**

So, let's take our squirminess and ask the question "why"? Why does the notion of Christ as king give us pause? And, if Christ is about a *different* kind of kingdom, what kind of a reign is that?

On this Sunday between the seasons, we do well to look back through the whole season and what we have been learning about *all* the faces of Christ; all the many meanings given to this one who came long ago and comes again and again. For us, here in this place, this Sunday is a summation of a journey we've been on all this Fall.

Waaaayyyy.....back in September, on Roundup Sunday, we kicked-off our series: Where Would Jesus Lead?

We delved-in to learning more about Jesus –who he was and is and what he stood for.

We journeyed with Jesus through the Gospel of Mark, and encountered him with characters of many kinds, challenges of every variety, and encountered his teaching in all sorts of situations.

Today, as we consider what the "Reign of Christ the King" looks like, we'll look back to recall the nuggets of those teachings. Remind ourselves where Jesus *would* lead us, if we are willing to follow and keep on keeping on with him on The Way.

If you want to review more in depth (and no, there won't be a test!) the Sunday sermons are available in a couple places for several weeks or months back. One place is on the website. The other is in the file box outside my office door.

### **A. What Would Jesus Ride?**

That first Sunday, we asked the question: What would Jesus ride? Looking at the “tides of the time” that beckon to us and call us to get on one bandwagon or another. Jesus showed us, with the Syro-Phoenician woman, that healing a foreigner’s daughter was *not* taking away from “his own,” but responding from the heart to a mother’s desperation. That healing can happen for all when we expand the circle, and offer the love of God to all –whether a culture or religion we know and understand or not.

### **B. Who Is Jesus?**

Then, we feasted our eyes on a visual image—“Christ of Many Faces—an artist’s word picture of all the many names for Christ found in the bible. This was in order to reflect—with Peter—on that age-old question: “Who do people say that I am? and, more importantly, “Who do YOU say that I am?” For your life, your walk with God, your faith journey?

That reflection –whether on a work of art or the words of the bible, bring home the truth that Christ has *many* faces and Jesus’ life and teachings *many* meanings. That each soul on their journey must find what resonates with them. You can’t “borrow who Jesus is” from someone else, and certainly not from the crowd.

### **C. Who is the Greatest?**

We were reminded, again and again by Jesus, as he hit the message home with his first disciples: If you want to be the greatest in the Kingdom, you must be the servant of all.

There was a tribe of Indians who lived a long time ago in the state of Mississippi. They lived next to a very swift and dangerous river. The current was so strong that if somebody happened to fall in or stumbled into it they could be swept away downstream.

One day the tribe was attacked by a hostile group of settlers. They found themselves with their backs against the river. They were greatly

outnumbered and their only chance for escape was to cross the rushing river. They huddled together and those who were strong picked up the weak and put them on their shoulders; the little children, the sick, the old and the infirm, those who were ill or wounded were carried on the backs of those who were strongest.

They waded out into the river, and to their surprise they discovered that the weight on their shoulders carrying the least and the lowest helped them to keep their footing and to make it safely across the river.

### **D. Jesus is Not For OR Against!**

Jesus challenged our “bogus binaries”; our false dichotomies. He gives the disciples some “what for” whenever this argument raises its ugly head.

“There were some guys healing in your name, Jesus, but they aren’t part of OUR group. Our club. Our side of the street, or party or issue.”

Jesus took a child in his arms and said, “Hey! Look here. Open the eyes of your heart. Your mind, your arms. Enough already with this vying for power and competing with the other groups who are also trying to do good in the name of the Holy One and our shared humanity.”

“Want to know who is the greatest, and doing the most good? The most innocent, guileless, vulnerable ones. Welcome *all* who seek to serve and love and heal in my name – whatever they call it –whatever group or club name they purport.”

### **E. Treasures That Matter**

“And by so doing, Jesus continues, “You will store up **treasures that matter** – in earth *and* in heaven. Look all around you –earth is alive! Teeming with the goodness of God. Streaming with blessings in abundance; bountiful harvests of love, life and laughter – if we just open our eyes and hearts to Holy Love.

I told the story that week in October, of my family's multiple crises pile-up that was almost too much to bear all at once, except that we were borne up on the wings of eagles, and earth and heaven were resplendent with treasures we could not even have imagined.

### **F. What Do You Want to See?**

We heard a story of Blind Bartimaeus coming to Jesus, calling out to him. At first, the crowd squelches his reaching out. They try to shush him up. And Jesus teaches us all by asking a question:

“What do you want me to do for you?” And a second that is like it:

“What do you *want* to see?” and, as well, “What are you willing to hear?”

And we were challenged, and continue to be, to look around at our lives, our community and our world and ask ourselves: What voices are being squelched by the crowd that we need to hear? Voices that need to be heard – for the good of all? Need to be able to cry out to Jesus – Lord, have mercy on us! Who *are*, even now, crying out for mercy, for understanding, to be heard and welcomed into the community wholly?

Who has been on the outside, wanting to participate in the Family of God, but the shushing voices still keep saying “No! You're different. You can't come into the circle. Can't approach the Teacher and help us *all* open our eyes and be healed.

Jesus would lead us to open the eyes of our hearts; to open our ears to those who have no voice.

### **G. What is the Greatest Commandment?**

We learned from Jesus that radical love of neighbor can be found *everywhere*—all around us—if we just *pay attention*. When wounds are healed, inside and out. When the least likely helpers show up to help the ones previously deemed “enemy.”

When ordinary people do *extraordinary* things with great love, in the name of Christ, and follow Jesus' lead to love God and neighbor and self to the ends of the earth –then we'll know the love really is the greatest force of all.

### **H. Our Mites AND God's Might**

Jesus teaches us with the widow in the Temple, giving her mites – her two tiny coins—to *notice*. Not only the unremarkable and meager, but the powerful and impressive. And then, to bring –whatever we have and are – to God's holy dwelling, and join *with* the mighty power of God and watch the world change. Our mites with God's might is a mighty force for good.

### **I. What Is Jesus Impressed By?**

Finally, towards the end of Jesus' ministry, he and the guys are moseying around Jerusalem, doing the tourist thing. The disciples are awe-struck by the big stones and towers and are marveling away when Jesus stops them in their tracks:

“You're impressed with the *wrong* things! Treasures that don't matter. Things that don't last. Put your faith in the firm foundation that is God and God's love for the least of these—like the poor widow, barely noticed at the altar; like the old men who plant trees they will never get to enjoy; like those values, hearts and investments that will last.”

### **III. WHAT REIGNS IN YOUR LIFE?**

And so, we wrap it all up, wrap our minds and hearts around who Jesus *is* and where he *leads* us, and we come to where it all started and what Jesus was all about: The Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of a different kind, where God's way is supreme. Where love is the law. The kingdom that is within us, among us, happening all around us. Where the lion lays down with the lamb; where swords are turned into farming tools to feed each other instead of destroy. Where Christ's reign wants to break in – if we will be let it; where the Way of Jesus is a life-giving way to walk and follow.

And, so, on this day, this Reign of Christ Sunday, as we look to the Kingdom of God within and among us, the question is before us:

What reigns in *our* lives? What reigns in *us*?  
What do you give the reins to?

We began, way back at the beginning by asking “What would Jesus ride?” Now, today we ask ourselves: “What do we turn over the reins to?” What truly has power, authority and guidance in our lives? What do we marvel at that is worthy of our praise? Focus on that is lasting and true? What impresses a firm foundation upon us and into our very core, so that we are not shaken when the winds and waves of life threaten to overtake us?

I spent the weekend with my family, where not only cancer but Huntington’s Disease has come to dwell. HD is a cruel, heartless, neurological disease that consumes body, mind and soul. Consumes entire families—stealing life and normal daily living away—too soon.

We could easily be swept up in fear and dread and let that rule, given all that. But instead they, and we, choose **love** to reign. Look to the king of a different kind to rule and to remind us of our firm foundation.

Sometimes that has to be **tough** love —because we, like so many families, are also touched by addictions and emotional trauma, and that chaos could *also* rule.  
“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, and be grateful,” scripture reminds us, over and over.

### Living as Those Made Alive in Christ – Colossians 3

**1**Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2**Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3**For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4**When Christ, who is your<sup>a</sup> life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**12**Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13**Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **14**And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

**15**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. **16**Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17**And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

A kingdom of a different kind. Ruled by a king of a different kind of heart. A king who is the servant of all – not ruler *over* but leader *with*. “I’m not that kind of king,” says Jesus. That kind you see around you in this world. In fact, I’m more of a prince. The Prince of Peace, come to bring healing, Presence and the power of love into this world—*through* you.

“Let *my* peace rule in your hearts; exude from your very lives – thought, word and deed.” Let us embark upon Advent this week – preparing our hearts and lives. Asking the Prince of Peace to come, reign in us, and be born in us anew this year. Amen.

Lord, Reign In Us

You thought of us before the world began to breathe  
And you knew our names before we came to be  
You saw the very day we'd fall away from you  
And how desperately we need to be redeemed

Lord Jesus come lead us  
We're desperate for your touch  
Oh Great and Mighty One, with one desire we come  
That you would reign, that you would reign in us

We're offering up our lives, a living sacrifice  
That you would reign, that you would reign in us  
Spirit of the Living God fall fresh again  
Come search our hearts and purify our lives

We need your perfect love  
We need your discipline  
We're lost unless you guide us with your light

Lord Jesus come lead us  
We're desperate for your touch  
Oh Great and Mighty One, with one desire we come  
That you...

