

November 20, 2022
Christ the King Sunday
The Rev. Amanda Gerken-Nelson

Well my friends, we've made it to the end of the liturgical year.

Next week marks the first week in Advent, believe it or not, which is the first Sunday in the new liturgical year – the journey to Christmas is about to begin

Target and other stores might have you think that Christmas comes immediately after Halloween, but don't be fooled!

We have the whole season of Advent, and we have today – Christ the King Sunday

Let us not end the year without reminding ourselves of what may be one of the most important teachings of our faith – that Christ is King

Yet, lest we think that this is a day to imagine Jesus on a throne robed in great linens and judging the sheep from the goats as we hear in the book of Revelation

Note, instead, the lesson we get as our gospel reading this morning: the setting is a place called "The Skull" and it's where Jesus is crucified on the cross, the only claims of "King-hood" come in the form of mockery from the Roman soldiers

Take it in my friends, our King

Debie Thomas wrote in a reflection on this text that "if there is any moment in the Christian calendar that must smack all smugness out of us — all arrogance, all self-righteousness, all contempt — this one has to be it. Our king was a dead man walking. His chosen path to glory was the cross."¹

Can you believe it?

Can you believe it?

I have to admit that this is one of the most devastating things about our faith, and the most inspiring

Devastating because I want might! I want right! I want clarity from my "king"

¹ <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2458-a-king-like-no-other>

Inspiring because my “king” is a suffering servant – my “king” is as deeply connected to the sorrows of this world as he is the glory – my “king” is not about a “higher-than, over-you” kind of relationship but rather a “I died alongside you” kind of relationship

And that, that kind of “king-ship” is enough

For those of us who have been around churches long enough to hear the stories of scripture many times, we know that this wasn’t enough for Jesus’ contemporaries: his siblings in the Jewish faith wanted a warrior, a King to usurp the Roman Empire and give back to them what had been done to us

The Roman leaders wanted a quiet, submissive, subservient religious teacher who didn’t rock the boat

Jesus wasn’t enough of the “right” things to gain the groundswell of support he needed on either side to avoid the cross

And, still, in not being “right,” Jesus is enough

Jesus wasn’t the messiah because of his superlatives, Jesus was the messiah because he was God incarnate

Jesus didn’t have to reach certain milestones in order to achieve resurrection – it’s not like God the great parent was checking in with him when he got home each day “how’d you do today? Did you get all your homework done? Have you applied to that Ivy League school yet? Land that great, high-paying job?”

God didn’t have Jesus come to earth as a prince or a rich man, Jesus came to earth as enough and in being enough, he changed our lives forever

And in being enough, Jesus sanctified our “enough-ness”

We are not God’s beloved children because of our superlatives

God did not put us on this earth in one way or the other as if to say that our socio-economic status is the sole thing that defines us and makes us holy

God did not decide that our gender identity or expression, our sexual orientation, the color of our skin, our physical and mental capabilities, or any of the markers that our society distinguishes determine our worth

We are God's beloved creation, and therefore we are enough

You are enough

I know because Christ is the King

The one who's enough-ness matches yours and mine is he who reigns forever and ever

Karoline Lewis, preaching professor at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, wrote in a reflection this week that "to claim Christ as King means to live as if you believe it to be true."

She uses this in the context of describing her late father's life – he was a Lutheran pastor and, she writes, "He was confident in his faith, but never overly demonstrative about it. Rather, he lived as a citizen of the kingdom he knew to be true—a kingdom of forgiveness and reconciliation; a kingdom of acceptance and belonging; a kingdom of righteousness and blessedness for all."

A kingdom of enoughness.

What does it mean to us to live as if Christ were King?

To live as if we believe that Jesus was enough and we are enough to be inheritors of that great kingdom, that great love, that great mercy just as we are?

It's a radical thing that Karoline and I, and dare I say God, are asking you to do – live as if Christ were King – because it requires us to live in a way that is pretty radically different from the world we live in

To live with Christ as King is to recognize superlatives as being of minimal importance to God – I can't say that you should care nothing for them, I don't think that's the point – but they are not the thing by which God is measuring your worth

To live with Christ as King is to recognize that Christ did not *actually* strive to be "King" but came as a servant of humanity (Matthew 20:28)

To live as if Christ were King, we have to throw off some of the things society says are important and to instead center the things that God has shown us through Jesus: love, mercy, forgiveness, service, grace

“to claim Christ as King means to live as if you believe it to be true” (Dr. Lewis)

To live as if Christ were King also means, and I think this might be the hardest thing for some of us to do, is to live knowing that you are enough, just as you are.

What a powerful reminder as we end our church year cycle and prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord once again as a baby in a manger

I do not typically do New Year’s resolutions, but this calling – to live as if Christ were King, the one who was enough to redeem the world just as he was and who sanctifies my own being as enough – might be one I will resolve to certainly try to do

Christ is enough – you are enough

Christ *is* king. Alleluia! Amen.