

## Christ the King Sunday B

Daniel 7:9-10,13-14

Psalms 93

Revelation 1:4b-8

John 18:33-37

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Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I added that extra verse today (v. 38) because Pilate's question is so poignant. Truth seems to be a moving target. It's a good question from a man who is used to dealing in politics, questioning how Jesus possibly imagines making use of a political platform founded on truth. In Pilate's mind, it'll never work.

In Pilate's mind, if Jesus wanted to keep his life, given the circumstances, then he should have been thinking about the truth that was chanting out in the courtyard. Because the truth was if Jesus didn't give in to the demands of the religious leaders who sought to maintain stability at all costs, his version of the truth would be gone.

In Pilate's mind, Jesus was a subversive nuisance who would never amount to anything – he didn't even have an army, but a laughable, disjointed, uncommitted and small, very small, following. If Jesus had any wits about him, he would've known he was no match for Pilate's authority.

Well, it's not the first time Jesus was told he was going about it all the wrong way. What Pilate had yet to learn, however, was that Jesus is the way.

Here's how Rev. Dr. Karoline Lewis<sup>1</sup> describes Jesus' Kingdom: *What Pilate misses, what most of the world misses, and what potentially might pass us by is that Jesus' Kingdom was never a place but a perspective, never an established rule, but a stated reality of how to live life, never a fought for hierarchy, but a forever way of interpreting the world and embodying such a way in everything that we do.*

So countercultural was the way that Jesus lived his life and taught that those around him (and yes, us, too) nearly missed the revolution he was bringing about.

It's nearly missed because we more easily subscribe to a "kingdom" that is easy, delivered to us on a silver platter, a kingdom where we don't have

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=5252>

to think or act or be challenged. Sometimes we just want Jesus (or anybody else) to fix things for us. We are tempted to say, "just tell me what to do!" Like the rich young ruler we implore, "I've done everything you've asked!" Or maybe we feel that we'd never be good enough anyway, so why bother trying. At times we're too busy in our lives to ponder answers to injustice, hunger, violence, poverty, apathy – and after all - if Jesus is a king, why isn't he doing something about the problems we can plainly see? I get asked this by people all the time. What kind of "king" is that?

Hmmm, we end up asking the same question as Pilate. We too question whether Jesus really is a king in our lives at all.

Rome of the day, collected taxes, enforced peace, had clear lines of authority and had many subjects, but isn't that an interesting word? "Subjects?" It hints at the fact that they didn't occupy their place in society voluntarily. They were subjected by force and manipulation. *Know your place, don't cause trouble, pay your taxes, don't question...* they were a divided society, divided by those who had power and those who did not.

Jesus wouldn't take part in a kingdom like that. For Christ was and is working to build what we might call a *community* kingdom, a place of liberation for all, food for all, peace for all. And to accomplish this, what is needed is willing participants. People who *volunteer* to be part of it. Jesus would never establish a kingdom, a holy family, by force or manipulation or demonstrations of power, but by invitation and in showing by way of his own life that it was possible.

Perhaps a better word than "kingdom" then, would be "partnership;" God's desire is to partner with us. As partners we share in the work of God for the whole world.

For a partnership to work, however, it requires the full participation of each one. If we are part of God's partnership, we cannot have one foot with God and keep the other in the kingdoms of the world. It just doesn't work. We cannot one day come to church and the next day speak badly about our neighbour. Our actions speak loudly if we hoard money or possessions while we actually have far more than enough. Our integrity is compromised if we embark on a ministry God has given to us and then abandon it part way through. And so, our place in this partnership necessitates deep and honest reflection and an unwavering commitment to Jesus' way.

Now, that's not easy, especially while living in a "kingdom" world. But our strength, our encouragement, our hope comes from knowing with whom we are in partnership.

God has declared a holy commitment to us, through Christ. Even though we mess things up on a regular basis, Christ offers forgiveness and renewal. When we're uncertain about the next steps, the Holy Spirit whispers us forward. We don't strive for perfection – as if that would make us an acceptable partner – but strive to understand who we are and whose we are.

We are also partners together. It's not just a billion, billion individual partnerships between each one of us and God, but all of us together. As we say so often, we are God's family. We work together, worship together, welcome, study, eat at this Table together. The early disciples knew that spending time together would help them grow into a loving community. They refused to allow their old ways to creep in and return their lives to what they used to be. Instead they clung to their partners, they clung to God and to one another and in that work, in that commitment, found a life that many of us look upon with wonder.

Today, we welcome among us new members, or perhaps we should say "partners with us." It's not a welcome to sit back and relax; it's a welcome to the work, the ministry, the justice, to welcoming, giving, learning, communing together. It's a welcome to an ancient partnership in which we commit with one another to following Jesus. So, bring who you are into the family. Bring your gifts and your struggles, your hurts and your insight. We are glad to make room for you and to share this beautiful and hard work.

We work in sure and certain hope that the kingdoms of this world will not prevail. They cannot withstand the persistent, pervasive, prevalent love of God for which there is no substitute. Love cannot be bought or sold or contained. Love is the truth; love is Christ. Amen.