

Christ the King Sunday B 11/24/2024

Today is Christ the King Sunday or Reign of Christ Sunday. Pope Pius XI in 1925 began this festival which was around the time of World War I. He felt that the followers of Christ were being lured away by secularism. They were choosing to live in the kingdom of the world and focus on themselves and not the kingdom where God reigned where the focus is on others.

Christ the King Sunday was declared to counter nationalism. People at that particular time were getting the 2 kingdoms blurred. Could this be what we are experiencing today?

The worldly kingdom, nationalism, is about gaining power and control to benefit only a certain group of people. It is about making one race, gender and sexual orientation superior. Jesus' kingdom is about making sure everyone is taken care of. It is about recognizing that every person is part of God's creation, and are equal. Each person has gifts and abilities that the kingdom needs in order to function.

Jesus' kingdom is about loving our neighbor, which is the person living next door to us, across the parking lot, all over our country. Exclusion begins when we become jealous of what others have. It is when we decide someone is not worthy. This is not what Jesus' kingdom looks like.

Jesus' kingdom is about realizing that no one is really worthy of anything. This means that everything we have is a gift from God and we are called to care for them. So, this then ties in with Stewardship Sunday which is also today.

This Reign of Christ and Stewardship Sunday have appeared at a time in our country and the life of our church to remind us of what Jesus' kingdom looks like. I believe that Jesus is looking for grateful followers who are willing to let him reign. But his kind of reigning is not about just saying yes Jesus, but actually doing what Jesus commands us to do.

Jesus reminds us that we are commanded to love God with all of our hearts, souls and minds and our neighbor as ourself. We know this, so why do we have to keep being reminded. Because just as in the time of Pope Pious we are being lured by secularism. Our country is taking a direction that could be destructive, and I know not everyone sees it that way. It seems that our country is headed away from Christ reigning.

Our lessons for today instruct us about the difference in the 2 kingdoms. They describe for us what power and control look like. What we learn challenges

us to look at where our allegiance lies and how to be followers in this time of the blurred kingdoms.

In our Gospel lesson we have Jesus being interrogated by Pilate. This is the trial narrative where Pilate confronts Jesus about being the king of the Jews. The Jewish leaders had accused Jesus of treason. Thus, they handed Jesus over to the Roman authorities.

Pilate represented the Roman authorities and not the Jewish people. He was kind of in the middle of it. He was being asked by the Jewish leaders to declare Jesus guilty of saying he was the messiah, and they didn't believe it. The church and the state were working together. They like to keep each other happy.

Jesus is no different here than any other time that he was confronted. He did not answer anything directly or sometimes not at all. Pilate's first question to Jesus was "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus turned it back on Pilate, "Are you asking this on your own account or did others tell you this?"

Pilate responds. "Well, Do I look like a Jew? Your people have handed you over to me. Tell me, what have you done?" Jesus responds, "I'm not really from here. My kingdom doesn't exist 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."

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."

In the gospel of John, the truth is not just a piece of information, it is the person, Jesus Christ. Jesus is asking us to listen for his voice, which is the truth. The more the kingdoms may seem blurred, the keener our hearing needs to be. Then once we believe we hear the truth, Jesus, what will be called to do with it?

First of all, let's talk about ways to hear the truth. I believe we are called to listen and observe how power and control are carried out. Is it used to control people or empower all people?

Nationalism is about singling out one group to be in power and control. Christians are involved with this also. We are given the ability to see that this is not what Jesus' kingdom is about. So, when we see this going on in our country, we will be called to stand up for the truth, Jesus.

Nationalism is about putting people in their places, defining for them what their place is in our country. Christians are saying that this is spelled out in the

Bible, and this has been written into Project 2025. A number of the authors will be on staff in our new government.

We have come here today to offer our allegiance to Jesus, to remember that everything that we have is a gift from God, and be part of Jesus' kingdom. On this reign of Christ Sunday, we are being reminded that there are two very different kingdoms. I have said earlier that the kingdoms may be blurred, but I wonder if when we work on hearing and observing the truth, Jesus, that the difference will become clearer and clearer.

Faith Lutheran Church has taken a stand on who we believe to be part of Jesus' kingdom, Jesus accepts all and we are all equal. We will all be challenged to listen and observe as things change, whether it looks like Jesus' kingdom or not. If it doesn't is when we will be challenged to clarify as to how we see and hear the truth of what Jesus' kingdom is to look like.

What will Faith Lutheran Church do if what is being done does not reflect what Jesus' kingdom is to be like?

Let us pray, We gather on this day to recognize you, Jesus, as our king and remember our role as grateful stewards. We often find that difficult to live out in our lives. Give us ears to hear and eyes to see you, the truth. Give us your wisdom to know how to stand up for you when your kingdom and the worldly kingdom get blurred, or when we see stark differences. In Jesus Name, Amen