

Sunday, November 24, 2024 – Christ the King Sunday

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Introduction

Even after Israel had experienced the vagaries of kings, the people still longed for a true king to set things right. He would have the king's title of Anointed One (Messiah); he would be the "one like a human being" (Son of Man) given dominion in Daniel's vision. Jesus is given these titles, even though he is nothing like an earthly king. His authority comes from the truth to which he bears witness, and those who recognize the truth voluntarily listen to him. We look forward to the day he is given dominion, knowing his victory will be the nonviolent victory of love.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you anointed your beloved Son to be priest and sovereign forever. Grant that all the people of the earth, now divided by the power of sin, may be united by the glorious and gentle rule of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 23:1-7

¹Now these are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:

²The spirit of the LORD speaks through me,
his word is upon my tongue.

³The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:

One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the fear of God,

⁴is like the light of morning,
like the sun rising on a cloudless morning,
gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.

⁵Is not my house like this with God?

For he has made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.

Will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?

⁶But the godless are all like thorns that are thrown away;
for they cannot be picked up with the hand;
⁷to touch them one uses an iron bar
or the shaft of a spear.
And they are entirely consumed in fire on the spot.

Psalm 132:1-12 [13-18]

¹LORD, remember David,
and all the hardships he endured;
²**how he swore an oath to the LORD
and vowed a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:**
³"I will not come under the roof of my house,
nor climb up into my bed;
⁴**I will not allow my eyes to sleep,
nor let my eyelids slumber;**
⁵until I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob."
⁶**"The ark! We heard it was in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Ja'ar.**
⁷Let us go to God's dwelling-place;
let us fall upon our knees before God's footstool."
⁸**Arise, O LORD, into your resting-place,
you and the ark of your strength.**
⁹Let your priests be clothed with righteousness;
let your faithful people sing with joy.
¹⁰**For your servant David's sake,
do not turn away the face of your anointed.**
¹¹The LORD has sworn an oath to David, and in truth, will not break it:
"A son, the fruit of your body, will I set upon your throne.
¹²**If your children keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them,
their children will sit upon your throne forevermore."**
[¹³For the LORD has chosen Zion,
desiring Jerusalem for a habitation:
¹⁴**"This shall be my restingplace forever;
here will I dwell, for I delight in Zion.**
¹⁵I will surely bless the city's provisions,
and satisfy the poor with bread.
¹⁶**I will clothe the priests with salvation,
and the faithful in Zion will rejoice and sing.**
¹⁷There will I make the horn of David flourish;
I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.
¹⁸**As for his enemies, I will clothe them with shame;
but as for him, his crown will shine."**

Second Reading: Revelation 1:4b-8

^{4b}Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Gospel: John 18:33-37

³³Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" ³⁵Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" ³⁶Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." ³⁷Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Prayers of Intercession

Rooted in God's abundant love for the world, let us pray for our neighbors, the church, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Revive our congregations, synods, and national church body to reflect the love, justice, and kinship of your kingdom. Raise up diverse leaders who teach and serve your people. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Nourish parched lands and bring relief to flooded places. Protect wildlife habitats and endangered species, that the chorus of creation's praise resounds with joy. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Grant wisdom to the leaders who govern, legislate, and deliberate on our behalf. Advance your nonviolent reign of justice-seeking love through their work. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Draw near to those who are detained, on trial, or incarcerated. Transform systems of retribution into systems of reconciliation and restoration. Empower activists who advocate for change. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Remind us of your enduring love in all seasons. Guide the planning efforts of worship leaders and volunteers who usher our congregation into a meaningful Advent. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

In your eternal presence the saints sing of your majesty. Join our voices with theirs in praise to the one who loves us and frees us from sin. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We offer our prayers to you, gracious God, trusting in your boundless love for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

A reflection for this Christ the King Sunday

Love Redefines Power and Dominion

In fairy tales, kings live in a castle, usually located on a hill (a safe place), surrounded by a moat for the utmost protection for the king and family. Modern political leaders often have more technologically advanced means to provide a similar level of safety against would-be attackers. Because of these preconceived notions of what kings are, hearers will need to be reminded that Jesus redefined the title "king." The appointed psalm says, "The waters have lifted up, O LORD, . . . the waters have lifted up their pounding waves. Mightier than the sound of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea, mightier is the LORD who dwells on high" (Ps. 93:3-4). While a king might have the ability to sail atop a roaring, chaotic sea, Christ the King is one who stills the waves (Mark 4:35-41).

In John's gospel for today, Jesus says "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth" (John 18:37). Perhaps the 'this' Jesus is referring to is a motioning with his hands to the cross, the most clear demonstration of God's love for humanity and the truest definition of kingship. Jesus redefines what power is and what people think God's power looks like to fight evil and suffering in the world. Jesus does not resist the way of the cross with force.

Rather than protecting himself from harm in any way, the vulnerable King Jesus dares to demonstrate God's love for all people. Jesus does not run from pain, anguish, or suffering. Rather, the risen Jesus, "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5), rushes to the places of disaster and suffering in the world. Jesus goes where storms are ravaging and have ravaged lives and brings life and calm into the chaos.



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