

**The Reverend Marjo Anderson**

**Reign of Christ (or Christ the King)**

**Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 Psalm 93, Revelation 1:4-8, John 18:33-38**

**21 November 2021**

**Salem, Bridgeport**

**“A King Who Submits”**

This is the day when we celebrate Christ the King.

We celebrate Christ through whom all of creation came into being:

*“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God....*

*All things were made by the Word, and with the Word was not anything made that was made.*

*In the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.” [John 1.1, 3-4]*

We celebrate Christ who continues to hold all creation together:

*“...in Christ all things hold together, [Colossians 1:17]*

We celebrate Christ who will ultimately reign over all that exists forever and ever.

*“The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of...Christ who will reign forever.”*

*[Revelation 11:15]*

Today we celebrate the reign of Christ over all things –

physical and spiritual, visible and invisible, known and unknown.

Our first 3 readings today all attempt to draw such a picture of this Cosmic King.

The author of Daniel writes,

<sup>13</sup> *...I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, one who looked human, but somehow more than human.*

*This One came to the Ancient One and was led into the divine Presence.*

<sup>14</sup> *Thus was conferred sovereignty, glory and dominion,*

*and all peoples, nations and languages became this One’s subjects.*

*This sovereignty is an eternal Sovereignty which will never pass away,*

*nor will this dominion ever be destroyed. [Daniel 7: 13-14]*

The Psalmist writes,

<sup>1</sup> *YHWH reigns, robed in splendor...armed with strength.* <sup>2</sup> *...existing from eternity....*

And the author of Hebrews writes that Christ is

<sup>4</sup> *the One who was, who is, and who is to come, the faithful witness,*

*the Firstborn from the dead, the sovereign of the rulers of the earth....*

<sup>7</sup> *... is coming on the clouds, for every eye to see...” [Revelation 1:4, 7]*

But our gospel gives us a picture that could not be more different.

a man who stands before the Empire, falsely accused by his own people,

with not one person willing to stand up for him.

What on earth happened to that powerful man so many had hailed as messiah?

What happened to the man who walked on water and stilled the storm?

the one who changed water into wine and fed 5000 people with 5 loaves of bread?

the one who made the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk?

the one who cast out demons and raised people from the dead?

What happened to the man with all that power and control? How had he lost it all?

The truth, of course, is that Jesus actually was not the one with the power and control.

For when Jesus the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

he became fully, totally, absolutely, completely human,

with the same freedom, the same choices, and the same limitations as each of us have.

It was not Jesus’ power that enabled him to perform miracles, it was God’s power.

What Jesus understood is that it was only when he gave up his own earthly power and control and submitted himself to God that God's power was able to flow through him.

That's why it took him so long to prepare for his earthly ministry – it took most of his life to build that relationship with God.

That's why at Jesus' baptism God announced how pleased he was with Jesus.

That's what the temptations were about – tempting Jesus to once again exert his control in order to obtain earthly power and wealth and fame.

That's why during Jesus' ministry he spent time alone with God in prayer and why he prayed and gave thanks before performing miracles.

That's why he ran away when the crowds tried to force him to be king.

That's why he ended up being arrested and tried, beaten and crucified.

Everything Jesus did was about submitting his will to God's will;

it was about giving up his control and letting God be in control;

it was about emptying himself so that God could work in him and through him.

That was the secret to what appeared to be Jesus' miraculous power .

He gave up his power, gave up trying to be in control of his life, & submitted his will to God's.

It's such a difficult concept for us to grasp.

We spend all our time trying to gain control over our lives & gain power that will protect us.

We do all we can to gain control over our health, our families, our homes, our work, our friends, our time, our schedules.

We do all we can to earn enough money

so that we don't have to worry about not having enough.

We do all we can to be self-sufficient and strong.

But the truth is that we are NOT in control of anything.

We can eat right, exercise, make regular visits to our doctors and dentists,

think positive thoughts, and everything else we can think of

to allow us to live a long and healthy life,

but tomorrow we could be run over by a bus and die.

We can work hard & buy a house & pay the mortgage & make repairs

so that we will have a place to retire,

but tomorrow a hurricane or a tornado could blow everything we own away.

We can try to be the best spouse we can be, but tomorrow our spouse could file for divorce.

We like to think we're in control, we try to be in control, we desperately want to be in control,

but if we actually believe we are in control, we are deceiving ourselves

and simply holding to an illusion.

The truth is, God holds all the control.

God may allow us a certain amount of freedom,

and the chance to make our own decisions, choose our own path, go our own way.

But there is a limit to the freedom and control and power that we have.

First, God has attached consequences to our behavior,

and anytime we choose to go against God's will,

we cut ourselves off from God's power and love.

And second, God has the power to intervene in our lives

in any way God chooses and at any time God desires.

The purpose of our Christian journey is two-fold

First, it's about our relationship to God.

It's about being willing to give up our need to control our own lives  
and turning the control over to God.

It's about realizing that no matter what it is that we think we want,  
God knows what will truly satisfy,

It's about saying God, you know what I want, but not my will, but yours be done.

And second it's about our relationship to others.

it's learning to live as Jesus, laying aside our power and privilege  
so that we see every other person –

no matter their race or nationality or culture or class

or gender or sexual orientation or religious or political beliefs –

not just as our equal, but as someone we are called to serve –

not from the position of benefactor, but from the position of a servant or slave.

It's about seeing every other person as someone who bears the divine image,

someone who God may have sent into our lives,

someone who may have a gift from God for us,

someone from whom we might learn something,

someone through whom God might transform our lives.

It's certainly not easy to give up control of our own lives and submit our wills to God's will.

It's certainly not easy to give up power to see others –

especially those we may fear or dislike –

as God's gift to us.

But it's when we empty ourselves

of our human pride and arrogance and our need for power and control,

that we become an open channel through whom the power of God can flow.

And when that happens, God can and will accomplish miracles through us

and when that happens God's will is done and God's kingdom comes on earth as in heaven.

So on this Christ the King Sunday,

*“let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,*

*but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.*

*And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death....*

*Therefore God...highly exalted him [crowning him King]*

*so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, -to the glory of God the Father.”*

Let that same mind be in you

that you may empty yourself, see the face of God in every human being, humble yourself,

and become obedient to God, even to the point of giving up your life.

When we do that the prayer we pray every week will be answered:

Thy will be done; thy kingdom come.

For Christ is king!

And to Christ belongs the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. **Amen**