

CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

The Rev. Fr. Robert G. Eaton - All Saints' Episcopal Church, San Diego, CA

I greet you as your newly appointed Interim Rector, that appointment being made by your Vestry, and given approval through the Diocese of San Diego Standing Committee. And what a wonderful day this is in the Church Year to do so, as we lift up and honor today Jesus Christ as King of all the Universe. A wonderful thing for today, because, there should be no confusion about who is the King of All Saints Parish. It is Jesus Christ himself, and no other. Humbly then, this day of new Interim Rector, and the Western Catholic world's exaltation of Jesus Christ as King of all, gives us the opportunity to point to what that Kingship means. We will have time to briefly focus on a few of those characteristics, which I believe will help us as priest and people work together in this Interim period.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord Yahweh, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

A few days ago, I was sent a note of congratulation from the Senior Warden of my most recent Interim ministry, and so I bring you greetings and prayers from the parish in Hemet. (When they say they are praying for you, well I hope that's a good thing, and not preventative!). It seems divine timing to me that today such a verse that fits the naming of that parish, Good Shepherd, should be the first of our lessons, a sign of affirmation of this call. Normally, I look for the Lord's blessing of letting me know that I am GOING to the right place to serve him, that is BEFORE I get there. Having this lesson on the Good Shepherd today AFTER I have arrived is not the way I would prefer confirmation of His will. In any case, it is a bit hair tingling on this first Sunday officially together to have the Good Shepherd in the first lesson, and God's blessing of All of His Saints in the Gospel. And that's how I'll take it, as a sign of God's blessing to have me move from Good Shepherd parish to All Saints parish for us to work together. May the Lord's will and way be done.

With that in mind, I'll take this moment to say that I won't be using the Old Testament lesson to bring forward attributes of the Kingship of Christ, apart from what we can briefly see in Jesus' teaching from the Gospel. I WILL say, though, that the prophecy from Ezekiel used in today's lessons is more about giving foundation to Jesus' teaching about sheep and goats, rather than kingship. That is to say, because God took on the role of being a Good Shepherd (and not a bad or corrupt shepherd) God knows exactly what it means to be a shepherd, and so God knows the difference between a sheep and a goat. In other words, as in the Gospel, there is no hiding from Jesus Christ on judgment day. A goat in sheep's clothing will be judged rightly; Make sure then that you understand this: judgment day for you will be on God's terms, not yours. You may WANT to define goodness and rightness with God, your favor with God and his blessing, on how YOU think it should be. But God is not fooled. He knows the difference. You may not know what your right hand is doing, but God does. And there will be no acceptable excuses for any lack of righteousness.

And THIS is one of our most important understandings of who God is, God as Father, God as Son, God as Holy Spirit. And in fact, is even at the basis of every EARTHLY kingship. And that is this: It is what GOD wants, and what GOD ASKS for that you should be bringing to him. If God asks – and He has --- for every part of your being, made into a living sacrifice to Him, then every part of us: our bodies, our minds, our souls, our spirits, our jobs, our careers, our

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families, our thoughts, our feelings, our finances, our talents, our gifts, our skills, our hopes, and dreams, our communities, our church, our fellowship, our friends, then this is what we are called to bring to him. And not what WE think alone would be good for God! You hear the arrogance and ignorance. I hope you follow me. God knows what He wants. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the King of the Universe, knows what He wants. Our attempts to bring him something else .like what WE want to bring as acceptable, are feeble and, really, unacceptable.

I have an illustration for you which may seem completely irreverent given the seriousness of what I just shared with you, but sometimes it takes the message coming from a completely unexpected and sometimes humorous direction to help us get the point.

There is currently running on television, a Commercial for a certain – and I will keep it unnamed ---brand of Beer. The setting is this, There is a medieval King sitting at a high head table, and subjects are bringing him tribute for a festive castle meal. One brings a six pack of this commercial's particular modern beer, and it is gladly accepted by the King as the proper gift and tribute (because that's what the king wants), and this is followed by a huzzah! from all those at the meal. (although in the commercial they don't say Huzzah!, they say “Dilly, Dilly!”). A second subject of the crown and member of the Kings court brings a tribute of the same kind of Beer, although this time a 24 pack, and the King is delighted at this proper gift and tribute, because that's what the king likes,. And the crowd mirrors the kings blessing with another round of “Dilly, dilly!” Finally, a third member of the court brings a bottle of something which looks HOME-BREWED. When asked by the King with great skepticism just exactly what it was this subject of the crown was offering, He said, “This is a spiced honey mead wine that I've really been into lately.” Obviously not what the king wanted or what pleased the king, the courtier was not blessed with Dilly Dilly, but taken away to be introduced to the castles' Pit of Misery.”

Although I doubt Christ the King on his throne on the Day of Judgment will give up a loud “Dilly, Dilly” for the righteous, Perhaps you can see the point of what will happen.and why.

It is not a coincidence that today we are actually receiving and blessing the Financial Pledges of this congregation, that is, YOUR financial intentions , rather than last week, because the action fits so well into this message of Kingship and what we all offer to the King from ourselves. Now I suppose that if you were to listen in as your pledged intentions for this next year were confidentially being tallied you might hear a great number of “Dilly, Dilly's” coming from the room. And if that were to be true, I suppose you might here two or three “Pit of Misery!” as well. The Good News is that none of those humans beings are the King of All, and He is the one who administers judgment.

Judgement Day is not the same as Ingathering Day. But then, Ingathering Day is not meant to be the final day for what God asks of us financially. Based on what you have heard in scripture and in sermons since October, you know what God wants from us....He wants it all. And that is while we are here still on earth. This is seen by the questions Jesus answered in the Gospel lesson. The day of blessed action toward others was not just on that one day of Judgment. It is a reference to our whole lives, every day of them. And so we take this one day of Ingathering not only to offer before the Lord at the Altar what we intend to give for this next year, but it becomes one more opportunity ...before we move on to other themes and teaching and challenges of our discipleship.... to consider well our trust and our faith in our God and our King of all Faithfulness to US.

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Let us then look briefly at some of the keys of Kingship that Jesus presents in this Gospel reading, a presentation of all that he has taught during the day already, and thus becomes a summary teaching.

Jesus has been teaching in Jerusalem, and now with his chosen apostles, about the Kingdom of God. This moment of teaching from today's Gospel is no exception. Everything he is going to say about judgment day is prefaced by direct teaching, not by parable, about who He is and even Will be. He is the Son of Man, and He will come in glory, with the whole host of heaven, and, then he says in reference to his kingship, that he will sit on the throne of his glory. If that is not enough, then he will refer to what he will say in blessing and cursing, by identifying himself as “the King,” and thus, with such authority and power.

What we can learn from this teaching then, contains some of those attributes and characteristics of who this King is, and what this Kingship is all about. But because of how it is directed, that is, to ALL the PEOPLE, both his sheep and those that are goats, we can see that the attributes of the King are attributes that the KING WANTS TO SEE IN US. What this King of the Universe wants to see in us are attributes and action that He has already and will be doing himself. His own humbling to give up the glory of the Godhead; His voluntary willingness to give up everything, coming out of his love for us, leading to his own death; and after the day of Judgment to yield the throne to God the Father, the only one who has not been made subject to Him.

As Matthew Henry said in his 18th century commentary, “ the good works here mentioned are what teaches us this in general, that faith working by love is all in all in Christianity; and as James would say in his epistle, “Show me thy faith by thy works;” .So the good works here described imply three things of the peculiar and particular Kingship of Christ, which the world rarely sees consistently in its Kings and Leaders, but which must be found in all that are saved.

[1.] First, Self-denial, and contempt of the world; we are to consider the things of the world not inherently good things, except than as we are enabled to do good with them: this is the action of Jesus that even though he was God, he humbled himself and came to this sinful world to redeem it;

As well, for us, as the scripture and the early church fathers, would agree with Matthew Henry, “Those are fit for heaven that are mortified to the earth.”

[2.] Second, Love for our brothers and sisters in Christ active and tangible, in the same way that God's love for his physical creation, brought Jesus, King of the Jews, to the cross, that he might be king of all; this of course is the second great commandment. It should be noted that those who have nothing to give must show the same disposition some other way.

[3.] And Third, A belief in Jesus the King as the Christ, and a regard for all others with this faith in our eye toward others. Not just the relief of need, but as Henry said, “the excellency upon the good work is when in it we serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Those good works shall then be accepted which are done in the name of the Lord Jesus”

So then, our celebration of pomp and praise for Christ as King will only have lasting meaning when we take the same occasion, as today is such an occasion in our intentions, to consider well, to assess in light of Jesus' Kingship, our own self-denial, our love for each other, and our belief becoming the purpose for serving each other in the Name of Jesus Christ.

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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