



24 November 2024

Christ the King Sunday

Pastor Chris

To be fair, we have to go back to last week for a moment. You know the scripture out of the book of John, chapter 8: “you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” In speaking truth, if you were here last Sunday, you heard me tell the story of the overflowing coffee pot. I led you to believe that it was my wife’s fault. In truth, I was the one who did not line up the coffee pot with the spout. I was responsible for the overflowing grounds and coffee the morning I came down the stairs. And now you know the rest of the story.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. Amen. My friends, it is an outdated idea. Except in the church. Oh, we might keep track of the latest royal news from Great Britain, but only for the entertainment value. So why do we celebrate “Christ the King” Sunday? Even in the church world, the title of this Sunday was renamed to “Reign of Christ.” It is a foreign idea, almost forgotten. But at least one of your pastors, if not all three, has an ancient bone of tradition anchored deep within himself. It is why we have banners with old church symbols hung today – the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the Chi Rho symbol – Greek letters that represent the first two letters of Christ in Greek. It is why there are kneelers across the front of the sanctuary today and why your pastors bow when they enter the sanctuary and leave the sanctuary at the beginning and end of worship. Because we worship the King of kings and Lord of lords and often that worship needs to be reminded to us in reverence for what Jesus has done for us - dying on a cross, rising from the dead, promising each of us a place in the Kingdom of God.

If that is not enough for you – then let me offer to you where we Christians, of the Lutheran flavor, always begin – with scripture. Revelation, chapter 19: “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh, he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords.” From Matthew 28:18 “Then Jesus came to them and said, “all authority in heaven and in on earth has been given to me.” In Revelation again, chapter 1, verse 8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” And from Daniel chapter 7: To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.” This is why “Christ the King” Sunday. It may feel somewhat out-of-date or foreign to us now, but one day, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Philippi, “at the name of Jesus every knee will bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Amen.

I could end there – but last week, a member of the church asked me about the vision for what’s next here at Ascension. I do not remember the exact words they used but something to the idea that the annual meeting was not very exciting. Oh, I am okay with that. In the old days, when 70 people would get together and decide where we should shave \$50 here or add \$100 here to a budget line made me want to crawl into a hole and die. Either we trust the elected council leaders and called pastors of the church are listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit, as our offerings are received and directed to the glory of God, or we do not. When we moved to a mission budget several years ago, annual meetings became meetings of celebration and updates so that we could



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actually move forward as a congregation and not get weighed down with the details entrusted to the church council and pastors to tend throughout the year. All that being said, as we celebrate the end of our church year on this “Christ the King” Sunday and prepare for the beginning of the new church year with the arrival of the First Sunday of Advent, I would offer some considerations for us to look to the days ahead.

Lutheran Pastor and Author, Dietrich Bonhoeffer shared these words. “The church is the church only when it exists for others...not dominating but helping and serving.” In that spirit, this is what excites me about the future, here at Ascension. A stellar 75th anniversary weekend – where our Friday night gathering with potluck and band gathered some 250 members and friends of Ascension. Let’s do it again. It turns out that the music and crowd inspired some neighbors at the park to ask what was going on. Members of Ascension invited them to join us and they did. We can be surprised or we can move to the place where that is our expectation! So we will look to at least one gathering in early September. Maybe a second one to welcome summer in early June. And already we have someone who is willing to lead the effort. Outdoor worship continues to be a big draw during our summer months for our second service – we will look to offer more opportunities next summer and we will need a small team to help us get there. We expect to return to El Salvador next summer after the energy of this past summer’s delegation. It is a dream to begin an El Salvador Chocolate Project much like the Mt. Meru Coffee Project in Tanzania. Cacao trees are \$5.00 a piece. When our sisters and brothers are ready to begin, could Ascension provide a forest of cacao trees? Pastor Edwin, Jeremy Poling, and Doug Paczesny all return to El Salvador in January for the installation of the new bishop for the Lutheran Church in El Salvador and to continue to research and walk alongside our sister parish as we look to a vision and continue to dream about chocolate. It is time, I believe, to look for a new partnership in Milwaukee. Our partnership with Cross Lutheran ended as we moved out of Covid. Your pastors would like to begin the conversation of establishing a third partnership with Faith/Santa Fe Lutheran Church – one of the three other Spanish language ministries of the Greater Milwaukee Synod. They have strong pastoral leadership and are beginning to imagine their future. We would like to explore what it would mean to walk alongside them in the adventure. One of the great joys about being a pastor at Ascension is listening to the stories of visitors who tell us that someone said “hello” when they visited. Hallelujah! Part of our future is welcoming those who visit – part of our future is going outside these walls to share the story of the power of God’s love that is made known and felt in this place. We have visitors and new members, since October, who are already engaged in ministry in this place. Healing Hearts dinners, Habitat for Humanity build days, Hope center and food bank volunteering, the Knit Wits, the choir, and praise band, Young at Heart, AMEN, JOLT - all have been ministries who have welcomed visitors. God is up to so many good things and still there is so much more ministry waiting to be revealed when we are open to where God will lead.

Two stories: Ascension’s pastors have been invited...

Last Thursday night at JOLT...

Dear friends, the future is bright and your age, whether nine or ninety-nine is not a roadblock to serving God, it is recognition that God will use whatever you offer to tell the story of the One who makes all things new until you are made new in the Kingdom of God. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.