

Christ Episcopal Church

2 Emerson Place

East Norwalk, Connecticut

The Last Sunday in Pentecost:

Proper 29 B

November 25, 2018

“Is Jesus a Model King?”

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

The Holy Gospel according to

John 18:33-37

Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell

you about me?” Pilate 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?” Jesus 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.” Pilate 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.”

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Amen.

Christ the King Sunday is one of the most recent global feast days of the Catholic church, only being initiated ninety-two years ago in 1926 by Pope Pius the Eleventh (XI) when the Pope was facing the final loss of the Papal States and the rise of fascism and communism in Europe. Jesus is the ultimate source of earthly ruling authority, the Pope was asserting, not any secular state. Yet, would Jesus himself agree? Was not Jesus' answer to the questioning Pilate, "my kingdom is not from this world"? Would

Jesus say, ‘I, not Mussolini, or someone else am the head of the Italian peninsula?’ Or rather would not Jesus insist that a country’s rule was not his calling? When someone in secular power begins to act as though they are indeed ‘ruler of the world’ or ‘ruler of part of the world’, is that not in essence violating what human rulers can do, under God? In fact, the book of Revelation notes that the governor of the whole world is satan himself. So, for some head of state to assert himself or herself as being ‘commander in chief’ of this or that, as is common even in the United States, that dangerously puts that person into the employ of satan, it seems to

me. So, it behooves the commander of this or that state to acknowledge who is indeed in charge, and that they are in fact at war with the true governor of the world, with satan. Going beyond that boundary makes one a figure head who acts on behalf of satan whose weapons are deception, death, and destruction.

Thus, we have this tempering and sobering feast day of Christ the King, pointing upward and outward to what is beyond the boundaries of the physical universe, as what is unseen is what is real, and what is seen is only temporary. When we order our lives according to Christ's rule,

we have come to grips with truth and true power.

Kings are not highly regarded by Americans in general. One king who countered and readdressed this image problem was the king of Denmark during World War II who put on an armband with the Star of David on it, saving thousands of Danish Jewish lives. In today's world the idea of an ideal king seems embodied in the king of the small Arabian country of Dubai on the Persian Gulf. The king of Dubai is a benevolent dictator, collecting no taxes, and having free public housing for the poor with several bathrooms, skylights, and multiple

bedrooms. He has created lush golf courses in the desert for everyone to use. Each year he sponsors a free derby, flying in thoroughbred horses and building state of the art veterinary hospitals and exercise pools for training and healing the bruised legs of the horses running in the derby. Each man marrying a woman from his country gets \$20,000 to buy her gold jewelry, beautiful clothing, and to set up their new household. The king's stores are stocked with Jacuzzis, cake decorating equipment, television sets, and computers in great quantities for sale. His reign seems idyllic.

Yet Jesus' kingdom is much different. Those under Jesus' authority often do not have a life of ease, but they always have a life which is and will always be greatly and eternally rewarding. The difficulties of this present age are far outweighed by the glory to come. As Jesus told Pilate, Jesus' kingdom is not "from" this world. His kingdom is from above, a heavenly kingdom, a spiritual kingdom, an everlasting kingdom. Rather than a king on earth, Jesus tells Pilate he is a witness of the truth, the truth that God is really the One in control. God is King of kings and Lord of lords. All kings are under God dominion. It is to this

fact Jesus has come to testify. Pilate is really the one on trial.

The late Sam Shoemaker, an Episcopal priest and Rector of Grace Church in New York City, told the story of a man entering the Salon Carre, the room in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, in which hang some of the great masterpieces of Rembrandt and Leonardo da Vinci. The visitor remarked to the guard, “What’s all the fuss? I don’t think these paintings are all that wonderful.” Whereupon the guard replied, “The paintings are not on trial, you are.”

The most common answer teenagers will give if asked who is king is the name of the late Elvis Presley, whose palace is Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee.

Pilate is the model of how not to make decisions. Running from place to place in his palace, Pilate is pulled between his realization of the innocence of Jesus and the angry demands of the Jewish leaders, to whom he finally concedes in order to keep from having another embarrassing public demonstration. Pilate earlier had a face-off with the Jews, Josephus the historian writes. And when Pilate threatens to behead any who cross him, six thousand Jewish men

gather before his palace, kneel down, and bear their necks. Pilate quickly backed away from his murderous threat. But here Pilate sees only one man as his challenger, Jesus. But Pilate makes the wrong decision.

A late nineteenth century Scottish mathematician person by the name of Henry Drummond wrote in the margins of his Bible a brilliant insight on eight actions which are helpful in finding God's will when making a decision:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=tFRHS5ykLCkC&pg=PR21&lpg=PR21&dq=Henry+Drummond++finding+God%E2%80%99s+will+when+making+a+decision&source=b>

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0God%E2%80%99s%20will%20when%20

making%20a%20decision&f=false

First and foremost, pray before making a decision.

Second, think.

Third, talk to wise people for advice and counsel, but do not let them dictate a decision to you.

Fourth, be cautious of your own bias but listen to it. Your will and God's will may not be at odds.

Fifth, do the next logical thing. Doing God's will in small things is the best preparation for doing God's will in great things.

Sixth, when the decision time comes, act on the knowledge you have. Do not be paralyzed because you feel you do not have enough information.

Seventh, never reconsider a decision once you have acted.

And eighth, be patient. You may not find out until afterwards, perhaps long

afterwards, that God was leading you every step of the way. However, I discovered that there may be another angle on decision making:

A friend of ours was recently facing a difficult decision about taking a job or not. She had some physical limitations which would inhibit her doing this new job because it required standing up most of the day. So, she rejected the offer after a day of work. But she had such a talent in doing the job that the owner of the business strongly urged her to reconsider and bemoaned how her absence would make their little business so much more stressful without her. This left

my cousin with a dual feeling about the job. Should she take it or stick with her decision not to take it? What do you think was the outcome?

[Ask the congregation for answers.]

She decided to work only part time, even though she felt the other employees would be miffed by having a part time person around, but the job she would be doing was not part of any other employee's skill set, and indeed she would be 'helping out' a small business owner in her town. So, she decided to work part time for a while. She did not need the money, but she wanted to have something other than volunteer work to

do. Thus, it seems to be working out OK for all concerned.

So, I would add a ninth point to Henry Drummond's steps to making a Christian decision:

Ninth: will doing the proposed action be beneficial to others and within our personal abilities? If so, then moving ahead in that direction seems a win-win system, to use the common vernacular.

Is what we are doing part of our skill set, and will it help others? Let us think on this point the next time we need to make a decision. Being 'other focused' is a good thing if we have the capacity to do so.

A bestseller by Laurie Beth Jones is entitled, “Jesus CEO”, which describes Jesus as a model chief executive officer. Her focus has gone to the other extreme of using Jesus as a personal example of how an executive should work. Some of the book’s chapters are “He Guarded His Energy”; “He Did the Difficult Things”; “He Took the Long View”; “He Was a Turnaround Specialist”; “He Clearly Defined Their Work-Related Benefits”; and “He Knew That Nobody Wins Until We All Do”. Such a description of Jesus as president of a generic corporation puts Jesus into the role

of a personal godlike being whose every move should be mimicked to be successful in business or other endeavors. But such a personalized God can become a projection of our limited needs, fears, and desires. As a result, such a God can become cruel or callous, partial and self-satisfied, leading to judgmentalism, condemnation of others, and marginalizing the weaker. In other words, Jesus can too easily be our scapegoat in much the same way as Pilate looked on him.

Instead, Jesus should be our example of how love wins out over hate, how healing wins out over brokenness, how truth wins out over duplicity. No one will ever be able

to encapsulate Jesus in a neat formula of how to succeed, because in this world he did not succeed, or did he? He went to the cruel cross to prove God's point. God's point is that the governor of this age has it all wrong. Might does not win out over right. Victory is not to the swift and powerful. And lies do not ultimately overcome the truth.

Our king is a king in chains who suffered that we might have life abundantly and eternally. Our king is one who gave his all so that we would have a rock on which to stand, a defense against all attacks. Our king is ruler over all the rulers, head of all the heads, yet one who suffered and died at

the hands of the hateful. His earthly throne was high on a tree, nailed there for you and for me. He ruled with gentleness but strong courage in the face of sure and certain death. Our king absorbed the humiliation of many to save the few.

Our king is Lord of lords and King of kings. Come let us adore him. Amen.

Description:

Christ the King Sunday has a troubling and recent history. Did Jesus actually accept Pilate's promotion of him as a king, or did not Jesus condemn such an action, taking the humiliating way to the cross as being his signature saving action.

Tags:

Pope, Pius, Drummond, decision, Bible, Jesus, CEO, cross, power, selfish, love, hate, brokenness, king, beneficial, skill, abilities, Denmark, Jews, Dubai, Persian

St. Raphael the Archangel

Episcopal Church

1520 Route 88

Brick, New Jersey 08724

The Last Sunday of Pentecost:

Proper 29 (B)

November 22, 2015

A Sermon by the Rev. Joe Parrish

DRAFT

“Who do you say Christ is?”

The Holy Gospel according to

John 18:33-37

Let us pray:

Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Here we are to worship,

Here we are to bow down,

Here we are to say that You're our God;

You're altogether lovely,

All together worthy,

All together wonderful to us.

We'll never know how much it cost

To see our sin upon that cross.

<https://youtu.be/CoxopsRSfdU>

We bow down to you, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Today we celebrate the great Feast Day of Christ the King, Christ reigning in glory, even as he hung upon the treacherous cross. And even then we can find cause for rejoicing for by his sacrifice for us on that cross, we who believe have all been set free from the concern about death and the grave. We will be welcomed by Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords today and at the portal to eternal life. We have no fear, no hesitation, no terrors, no cause for panic.

Christ has plowed the field before us. He has moved all the obstacles between us and his Heavenly Father. He has stilled the sea. And he has paved our straight way to heaven. And death itself has been crushed under his mighty feet: Christ our King!

Pastor Richard Donovan said,

“Let me offer you a sample prayer to pray. Bobby Richardson, second baseman for the New York Yankees, prayed this prayer some years ago at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting. Someone in the group made a note of it, and it is a classic. Richardson prayed:

“Dear God, your will--nothing more--
nothing less--nothing else.”

If we need a formula for changing our
lives, that's it! Pray that prayer daily--and
then try to live it: “Dear God, your will--
nothing more--nothing less--nothing else.”

Make Christ king over your life--and see
what blessings he imparts. You will never
be sorry that you did.”

“Jesus Christ will be Lord of all, or he
will not be Lord at all,” said St. Augustine.

“I am like a little pencil in God's hand. God does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it,” wrote Mother Teresa.

“Crown him Lord of all,” ends all the stanzas of the popular hymn, “All hail the power of Jesus’ name.” “Crown him Lord of all.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8Vk59>

[SHSWs](#)

And “Crown him with many crowns” is another favorite hymn, based on Revelation 4:10-11:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuMhept-Js>

In this time of seeming uncertainty, this great feast day reminds us again that indeed God is in charge, both now, ultimately and finally. And the gates of hell shall not prevail. So, we give thanks to God for the great things His Son has done for us. And today we rejoice.

‘Paul's admonition to the church at Philippi was “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

‘Paul was an unlikely candidate for rejoicing, because his life as a Christian was difficult. As he went about spreading the

gospel, people did all sorts of things to try to stop him. They beat him. On five occasions he suffered the forty lashes that had the potential to kill a man. People stoned him and left him for dead. He was in a shipwreck (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

But he knew what Jesus had to offer people, and he felt happy that God had chosen him to tell others about Jesus. Paul was a joyful Christian, and he encouraged other Christians to be joyful too.

‘Charles Wesley and his brother, John, were also unlikely candidates for rejoicing. Their lives were very hard. As they went about spreading the Gospel, they

encountered violent opposition also. On one occasion, a mob nearly destroyed the house where they were staying and drove their horses into a pond. The people whom they converted were often harassed and persecuted. But they found great joy in serving Christ and called other Christians to do the same. Charles Wesley wrote these joyful words, “Rejoice, the Lord is King! Your Lord and King adore”-- words that came out of his joyful life.

‘There will be times when we, too, will be unlikely candidates for rejoicing. Most of us at some time will experience hardships-- that's just part of life. But we

can decide whether we want to be crabby Christians or joyful Christians--we have that choice. If we choose to be joyful in spite of our problems, we will find that joy is its own blessing--that we can be happy in spite of difficulties. We will also find that our joy is a blessing to others as well, because genuine joy spreads joy.

‘An old Sunday school song said, “Brighten the corner where you are!” If we choose to be joyful Christians, we will do that--we will brighten the corner where we are. Then we will not only live in the light, but we will also find ourselves bringing light to the lives of other people as well.’

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In the words of the song, “All hail, King
Jesus”,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2Oun490Gs>

-by Dave Moody:

“All hail King Jesus, all hail Emmanuel:

“King of Kings, Lord of Lords, bright
Morning Star.

“And throughout eternity I'll sing Your
Praises,

“And I'll reign with Him throughout eternity.”

So, this day let us be a people who rejoice in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In a few moments we will be welcoming another two tiny souls into the formal membership of the Christian church by their baptisms. They were conceived in joy, and we pray today that their lives will continue in joy. The devil and his minions will be dismayed by this, and we can always expect he will try some tricky thing to remove from these two little lives the joy Christ has for them in their lives, and the joy Christ has

planned for their parents who bring them to us today for this grand Sacrament of Baptism. It gives all of us here in church great joy to welcome them and all of their loved ones who come to worship with us today. And we bid them not to forget where there is always joy abundant here in this sacred worshipping community at St. Raphael's Episcopal Church and in each church in our land. Here they and you will always be warmly welcomed, we can assure you of that!

Christ lives in his church and all his churches through all the lives who are joined today with us in prayers for these two little

ones. These tiny babies are the precious product of many years of learning by their parents, and even in our presumed failings and weaknesses, we uphold them in the loving arms of Christ because he indeed is Lord of lords and King of kings. Into his kingdom are all received with open arms to be with Christ now and forever. Our lives are forever beginning anew each and every day. Every day we awake and say, “Today is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

And then after we give God our thanksgivings for giving us yet another day to live and breathe on this God’s special

planet, we are then empowered to move ahead through each day knowing that in the arms of Christ we and all our babies and children and grandchildren and all the families are one in Christ' Spirit, one in the Lord. Let us never forget that. Christ will never let us go. Christ will never take his eyes in heaven off us. Christ will see us through every step, across every chasm, and past every circumstance no matter how difficult or challenging it may seem. That's why we call ourselves, Children of the Most High God.

And to bring all this joyful feeling more into focus, we know we always have God on

our side, always, as we work and do and speak in Christ's Holy Name. And even when we may stray off Christ's course for our lives, he completely forgets and forgives as we turn back to the way he has made for us in this life. He experienced all the pain and suffering that human life brings us human beings. Jesus maintained his kingly presence before Pontius Pilate, the Sanhedrin, and the entire Roman Empire. None of them had any real power over him. And none of them will ever have any eternal power over us. We may be hated by those who do not know a loving God. We may be misunderstood by those who do know an all-

knowing God. We may even be persecuted from time to time by those who may be eternally lost, but still we pray for them, that their eyes may see the true God in heaven and bow before Christ the King. Prayers in Christ's name will always be answered.

When we pray in the Name of Jesus, we pray powerful prayers. And even the satan and all his demons cower. They know the ultimate truth even though they deny that truth: that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Yet some for sinful reasons always will try to continue in darkness. But their darkness will never dissuade us from the joy in our hearts that we follow the one true God

and Savior Jesus Christ. To Christ always
be honor and glory now and forever.

Amen.