

Last Pentecost: Christ the King Sunday
 November 26, 2017
 Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's
 Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24
 Ephesians 1:15-23
 Matthew 25:31-46

Martin Luther King once said that the tragedy of the civil rights movement was not the evil done by the bad people, but the indifference of the “good” people—those who did not take the opportunities that were open to them. One theme of the last three weeks of Gospel lessons is the tragedy of lost opportunity. Three weeks ago Jesus taught that even in hardship we can find blessings. The foolish bridesmaids from two weeks ago missed the feast because they missed the opportunity to get oil for their lamps. Last week, the slave with one talent failed to take the opportunity to make an increase on what had been given to him by his master. All missed opportunities.

Jesus told his disciples that the day would be coming when he returns to his role as Son of God; he would be enthroned; and he would have all nations coming before him. In this role of king, he will rule as advocate for the hungry, thirsty, lonely, sick, naked, and imprisoned.

The sheep in the story are the ones who care for the needs of others with such a sense of fulfillment that their sense of servanthood defines them. With surprise, they said to the Son of Man; “But lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, or lonely, or naked, or in prison?” They found out that their role in this kingdom of his was to serve; and not to keep score.

His kingship is not about claiming fame or power; but about enforcing the reign of God, and Godly love, across God’s kingdom. That is the same image of ‘kingship’ that is understood from the Old Testament. The role of ‘king of Israel’ was to be a shepherd of God’s flock; to care for them; to find the lost, bring back the stray, bind up the injured, and strengthen the weak.

The people who bring delight to God, are those who do what their spiritual nature demands of them. That is why our personal journey in faith is an experience in transformation. Walking in faith involves you and me yielding our own nature, to be transformed into the nature of Jesus Christ. So the question for Christ the King Sunday is whether we are giving over the reign of our life to Christ as our king.

Or do we let fear of ISIS / Taliban / terror reign over our lives?

Or the fear of a disabling illness? Or of growing old?

Or the need to protect our pride at the cost of forgiving someone?

Or ensuring our own comfort more than helping someone else have ONE GOOD DAY?

Our CALLING is to take on the reign of Christ as our personal king.

The LITMUS TEST is to see that our actions come from our spiritual nature – not from a sense of duty to serve; but instead to reflect that we see Christ in all people.

Walking with Christ is giving him reign in our life; and in fact giving him reign over life; it changes how we look at the sick, the homeless, the poor, and those in prison. I have experienced that change in my life; have you? (For me it is a change still in process – some days I’m a sheep-goat.) When we give him reign, we see that his kingdom can be realized here and now. Let me share a few examples.

As Don Nemiro has been in the hospital, there have been many trips to Stanford by Rev Ardyss, a few by me, a get well card from all the preschool children, a friend caring for the Nemiro’s animals, and all of us praying for Don. Carol wrote a few days ago to tell me how much this has all meant to her. Everyone did what they did because it was a way to help; not for reward. Simple giving of self is a spiritual exercise.

The heart of the challenge we have as modern, overscheduled, overstressed Christians is how to live our whole life: secular / community / business / and spiritual life as an integrated, anchored person, who claims Christ as our King in everything we do. In Scripture we are promised the daily, living presence of God the Great Shepherd, and Christ the King to find, protect and guide us toward being all that we were created to be. We are called to claim Christ as our King.

Amen.