

Pentecost Last: Christ the King Sunday
 November 24, 2019
 Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's
 Jeremiah 23:1-6
 Colossians 1:11-20
 Luke 23:33-43

Today is Christ the King Sunday. The magi asked (Mt 2:2), "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" Thirty three years later Pilate asked (Jn 18:33), "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied to Pilate (Jn 18:36), "My kingdom is not of this world." Pilate ordered the inscription over the cross of Jesus to read, "Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews."

Herod was afraid that Jesus would be a rival to his kingship over Judaea. Pilate could not understand how this itinerate preacher, without crown or scepter or throne could be considered a king by anybody. Only a small gathering who followed him, listened to him preach, and saw him active in his ministry, could see that he was a very different kind of leader: he was their spiritual king.

So today we honor the reign of our spiritual king. Rather than studying the kind of king he is, maybe the more important question for us is - in what way is Jesus the King of yours and my life?

Richard Foster, Quaker writer and spiritual teacher, has written that God's desire is to give each of us a fulfilling and abundant life. Foster has examined spiritual practices from scripture, and from saints throughout the history of the church. From that perspective he has identified three characteristics of life that call for our intentional focus, to experience the Good Life of the Kingdom of God. This is the Kingdom Jesus lived for, taught about, and died for. This is the Kingdom where he is King. So let's look at these three characteristics that can increase our awareness, and lead us to more abundant and fulfilling life; the Good Life of the Kingdom of God.

#1: Provision. This involves all things that are *necessary* to carry on human life. We Christians take very seriously that material things are good – not evil; they have been created by God for us to enjoy and to be stewards of. So we attribute godly blessing to the provision we receive. So we have Thanksgiving Day... But it can be dangerous if we make a life goal out of accumulating material things. When we make that abundance the focus of our life, we make a god of those things, and we lose the spiritual grace of contentment. An example of an imbalance about 'provision' is to consider how many smart phones you own. I think I have 4 versions of iPhone in the closet, plus the one I carry. [Size of Santa Ana Rd homes vs new homes]

Foster has written that the Spiritual Disciplines of meditation, solitude, and simplicity all deal in an important way with this theme of provision.

#2: Place. This is “a mutually understood and accepted set of personal relationships that *give identity* to a person’s life.” My place is that of being your priest. Other places I hold are husband and father and grandfather. This concept from Foster of ‘place’ is about social function rather than physical location. There is a negative connotation to somebody being told that they need to ‘know their place’. But Good Life in God’s Kingdom calls us to have a *positive* sense of place, role, or function. The Spiritual Disciplines of submission, service, and guidance deal with this positive understanding of having a ‘place’ that centers us. [Dad-me his tax deduction]

#3: Personality. This characteristic refers to “the inward person, expressed in certain determinate ways or ingrained habits.” To live the Good Life there are certain habits that we need to cultivate, and other habits that we need to let go. Good Life in God’s Kingdom taps into the power of God to get us out of the habit patterns that enslave us, and to strengthen the ones that free us.

This Sunday we come to the end of this liturgical year and begin Advent - the season for reflection on what has gone before, weighing what has been good and effective – and what has not. It is a time to come to some conclusions about the life we have lived and to see if it has made any difference to God, to other people, and to ourselves. And if it has fallen short, how might we change things?

It comes down to our own will; a decision to place our lives in the hands of our King; deciding whether we will learn and adopt spiritual habits so that they might better recognize that our needs are met, our personal sense of identity is made clear, and our inward life feels whole – all through the faith we have in Jesus. **Christ becomes our King through our keeping a balance of provision, place, and personality.**

Choosing Christ as our King places us against the standards of the world, but offers us the Good Life of God’s Kingdom.

That is the world I choose to live in;
to see it more often in my day,
to share it more effectively with the people around me.
That is the life where I can look back on my day and the past year,
and say that I have experienced the Good Life
and I have shared it.
That is the life where Christ is King. Amen.