



Bringing Home the Word

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (C)

November 24, 2019

A Different Kind of King

By Mary Katharine Deeley

The readings for the solemnity of Christ the King in each of the three Sunday cycles help us to see how different Jesus' kingship is from that of earthly rulers. The reign of Jesus is not tied to judgment or authority, for he subjects himself to the judgment and authority of others. His reign is not tied to an ability to make and defend laws, for he submits to the existing law, which condemns him to death on a cross. His reign is not tied to the power to conquer nations or to lead great armies against oppressors. Christ the King comes to save, to conquer "death and the devil"

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 636, 1019).

Rather, the kingdom of God is about comfort, peace, redemption, truth, real justice, and mercy. Even from the cross, Jesus forgave his enemies and held on to no anger or hate. He welcomed repentant sinners into the kingdom. He resisted the temptation to impress others with the power that came from who he was and who he knew. In the great contradiction of our faith, the power of Christ the King is manifest in his willingness to become powerless for love of us.

What does that mean for us, his disciples? We, too, must let go of power, reject destruction, and turn toward God. As we make our way, we are called to practice forgiveness, hospitality, and humility in loving all of God's children. As we close this year and enter another Advent, this may be the best gift we can give to Christ our King. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

[Jesus] shows us that he enjoys dominion because he is a servant, glory because he is capable of abasement, kingship because he is fully prepared to lay down his life. By his passion and death, he takes the lowest place, attains the heights of grandeur in service, and bestows this upon his Church.

—Homily, October 18, 2015



Sunday Readings

2 Samuel 5:1-3

The LORD said to [David]: "You shall shepherd my people Israel; you shall be ruler over Israel."

Colossians 1:12-20

In him were created all things in heaven and on earth, / the visible and the invisible.

Luke 23:35-43

Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I catch myself trying to impress others?
- Like Jesus, am I willing to reject power and prestige and, instead, turn toward God?

Finding God's Kingdom

By Fr. William H. Shannon

You don't hear much about kings these days. They seldom make the news. Perhaps this is the reason you may find it difficult to get excited when Jesus tells us, "The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Yet that kingdom must have meant something exciting to Jesus. He was continually speaking about it. So it's fair to ask: Just what made Jesus so enthusiastic about the kingdom of God?

Perhaps I should begin by asking readers, "What do you think Jesus meant by the kingdom?" I put the question to a friend who is ninety-three years old. "I think Jesus meant that the kingdom is the way God wants the world to be," she said. "The world is partially there (there are lots of good people), but it is not yet fully there." An excellent answer to a difficult question.

Jesus himself never offers one simple answer to that question. He gives lots of hints, but we shouldn't be surprised that he never defines it. Jesus was not a philosopher proclaiming abstract truths. He was a storyteller. He describes the kingdom in stories taken from real-life situations his hearers would understand.

Perhaps you've noticed his parables tell us not what the kingdom is, but



what it is like. It's like the sower who puts seed in the ground and waits for it to grow. It's like a pearl merchant who gives up all his pearls to have one special gem. It's like a lowly mustard seed that grows into a big tree, a fishnet that catches good and bad fish, a banquet for which some show up and others do not.

Making the Kingdom Come

Each story gives us insights into what the kingdom meant to Jesus. It is a multifaceted reality that can never be fully captured in words or any single story. Perhaps the clearest way I can sum up what I think Jesus meant is to repeat the words of my wise friend: "The kingdom is what God wants the world to be."

But God is not content just to let this happen. God challenges us to bring it about. Do you know what God's greatest challenge to us was? It was Jesus. A Christian writer called Jesus the "one-man kingdom of God." This writer meant that Jesus was the first person totally human—and he was also divine—who fully accepted the kingdom of God. God says to us: Look to Jesus and in him you will see what the kingdom is. Listen to Jesus. He will tell you what it means to enter the kingdom.

The Church, the Kingdom

Jesus' preaching invites all to accept the kingdom and God's rule. He gathers followers, then sends them out to proclaim the kingdom. After his resurrection he gave this task of proclaiming the kingdom to the Church. So could we say that the Church is the kingdom? Not exactly. The Church is the instrument of the kingdom, calling people to accept God's loving reign over them. The Church is also the sign of the kingdom. People should be able to look to the Church and see in it—to some degree—God's loving family.

When we celebrate the Eucharist we are reminded of the difference between the Church and the kingdom when we ask for Jesus' peace: "Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom, where you live forever and ever." Only in the kingdom, where the fullness of God's reign is achieved, do we find true peace and unity. +



Lord, I am grateful for your gentle presence. Remember me even when I forget you.

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 25–30

Monday, Weekday:

Dn 1:1–6, 8–20 / Lk 21:1–4

Tuesday, Weekday:

Dn 2:31–45 / Lk 21:5–11

Wednesday, Weekday: Dn 5:1–6, 13–14, 16–17, 23–28 / Lk 21:12–19

Thursday, Weekday:

Dn 6:12–28 / Lk 21:20–28

Friday, Weekday:

Dn 7:2–14 / Lk 21:29–33

Saturday, St. Andrew:

Rom 10:9–18 / Mt 4:18–22

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